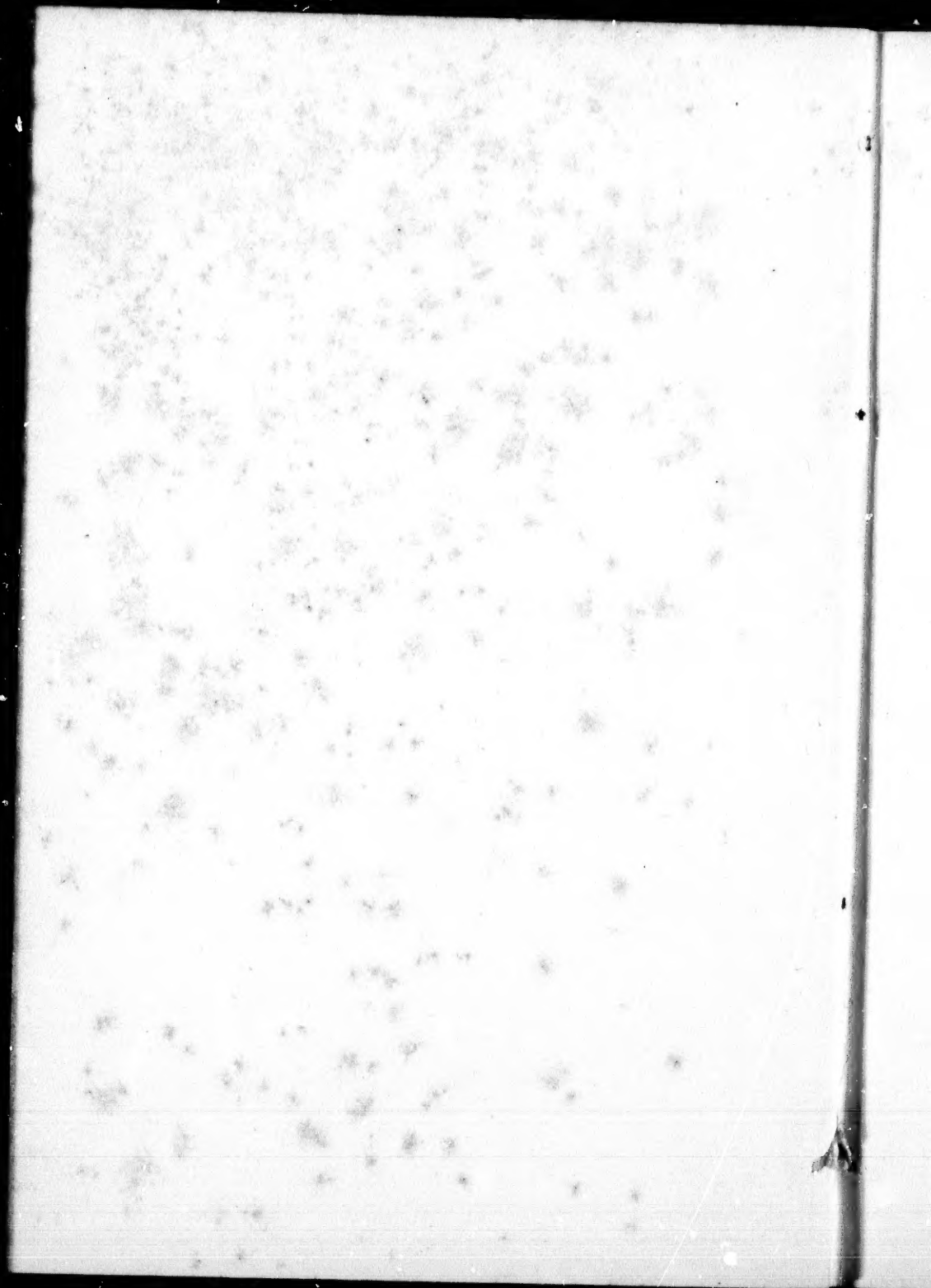


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THE LAMBS IN THE FOLD.



THE
LAMBS IN THE FOLD;

OR,

THE RELATION OF CHILDREN
TO THE CHURCH

AND

THEIR PROPER CHRISTIAN NURTURE.

BY

REV. JOHN THOMPSON, D.D.,
SARNIA.

"FEED MY LAMBS."

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PREFACE.

The following chapters do not profess to be a full and formal discussion of the themes embraced, but rather a practical exhibition and enforcement of certain great lines of duty. And yet, the whole subject of "The Relation of Children and of Families to the Church": "The Culture and Training of the Young": "Home-Life and Family Religion," etc., is carefully discussed, and what we deem to be Scriptural positions on these important points are laid down.

From long acquaintance with certain tendencies of thought, and currents of modern Christian life, it is our deep conviction that there is much unscriptural teaching and serious danger ahead, and that the earnest attention of fathers and mothers, of Sabbath school teachers and trainers of the young, must be directed afresh to these subjects. The Church is in danger of drifting away from her moorings on this whole question, and even many who are right in *theory* are wrong in their *practice*. And every error in the

things of God is dangerous, and especially here, where the spiritual interests of the young are concerned.

On the subject of Christian culture and the growth in grace of the young, there is much misunderstanding and confusion. We have broken up organic relations and individualized, taking what is true, only in certain instances and under certain conditions, to be the normal type of Christian experience and life in all instances and under every condition, and much practical error is the consequence, even on the part of those who ought to know better.

It was not because we imagined that we had anything new to say, or any startling disclosure to make, that has led us to write. And yet, had we not supposed that we had something of importance to say, and something, moreover, that the Church needs to hear at this particular time, we would not have written at all. For most certainly it was not the mere desire of authorship that has led us to give this volume to the public. We have all along felt we were dealing only with plain, Scriptural truths; insisting on what the Church has always professed, in theory, to believe; giving little children and the young the place in the Church that Christ gave them; and have simply claimed for them the culture and training that He designed them to have. But, probably, in this age of new theologies higher

criticisms, and novel methods, nothing could be a greater novelty or a more urgent necessity than an old truth newly stated, and, enforced by old considerations, set in new lights. This is all we have attempted to do, and, in fact, it was all that was necessary to be done. We believe most earnestly in *Evolution*,—the bringing of the new things out of the old ; new and fresh duties from old principles ; never breaking away from, but maintaining the connection with, all the past.

Within the last few years, the mind of the Church has been turned very specially to the care of the young, and the proper religious teaching of children. And all who have them in charge are eager to hear the subject discussed, but, on such occasions, there is often much said, from which we most emphatically dissent.

We have many earnest, fiery speeches at conventions, from men more accustomed to *talk* than to *think*. They tell us about the conversion of children, and furnish specimens : they discuss the proper age for conversions : we are told in our annual Church reports of the number who have "*joined the Church*" from the Sabbath school, and the inference is drawn that all the others are *outside of the Church* ; and, occasionally, the broad statement is made that they are the slaves of the devil, and on the broad road to

destruction. But not one word is ever heard of the glorious possibility, and blessed fact, of the growth in grace of children from the womb, or that by covenant promise the faith of the parents will be that of the children, and that the Christian home is the great School of Christ.

The great question now is: "How to get up a revival." But there is a prior question to this: "How to bring up the children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

That man does a great work for Christ who is instrumental in converting a sinner from the error of his ways. This is talked about by everybody. But how much greater the work—though you never hear it spoken of—so to teach and train a child, that it never needs to be converted. It is a blessed thing to reclaim a sinner and set his feet on the way of peace. But it is more blessed to keep the young in the way of life. Many a mother who has claimed her home for the Lord, who has trained her children for Him, till they have gone forth to occupy conspicuous places in the Church, is never heard of, and her name is never mentioned at a convention. She has been content to minister to the *Church in her house*, and is not classed among the Christian workers. But the Lord knows and approves of her work as most honouring to Him, and she will not lose her reward.

The great need of the Church to-day is a revival of *Home religion*, and the turning of the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers.

The volume is specially intended for Christian parents, Sabbath school teachers, elders, and, as a minister of some years and experience, we may include our younger brethren. And if any of the *Fathers* in the ministry may look into its pages in a spare hour, let us hope that what they read will meet their approval, and serve to give a fresh setting to an old truth, with which they have long been familiar.

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UNDER BOTH DISPENSATIONS WE HAVE
ONLY ONE CHURCH.

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.—Gen. xvii., 7.

This is he that was in the church in the wilderness.—Acts vii., 38.

And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.—Gal. iii., 29.

That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.—Gal. iii., 14.

And are built upon the foundation of the *apostles* and *prophets*, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.—Eph. ii., 20.

TWO DISPENSATIONS—ONE CHURCH.

THERE HAS BEEN ONLY ONE CHURCH.

That children were embraced in the covenant that God made with Abraham is admitted by all ; but some hold that this was not a Church covenant, as it embraced only temporal blessings, and chiefly the promise of the land of Canaan. It is said the old dispensation was outward and ceremonial, whereas the new is inward and spiritual. Natural birth and an outward profession constituted membership in the former ; spiritual birth and faith are the only conditions of the latter.

But this is not true. When a proselyte entered the Jewish Church he made a profession of the true religion and a promise of obedience, and any parent who did what he professed to do, was as truly saved as any professing Christian now. The Hebrew promised to take God as his God ; he promised obedience to his laws, and to exercise faith in the Divine promises ; and what does the Christian parent more to-day ? So that both dispensations are identical in

ONE CHURCH.

nature, however they may differ in regard to externals. The visible Church has always consisted of the professors of the faith together with their children, and these have been her members under both dispensations.

The covenant made with Abraham was *the covenant of grace*, and the same on which the Church rests to-day. The blessings promised were spiritual rather than national, for the Jews did not exist as a nation for centuries after this. It is called an *everlasting* covenant, and not a mere temporary arrangement that was to pass away as the nationality of the Jews has passed away for ever. In that covenant God promised to be a *God* to Abraham and to his seed ; what more is He to us than our God ? That covenant embraced more than temporal blessings, for it was, as Paul declares, *confirmed of God in Christ*. Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and he saw it and was glad. Paul also tells us that Abraham had the *Gospel* preached to him. The covenant then being the same, the Church resting on this covenant has always been the same. The Church in the days of Abraham ; the Church in the time of Moses ; the Church during our Lord's life on earth ; and the Church of God in our own day, is the *One Church* founded on the same covenant made with Abraham, and which is the Church's charter still.

This same church, founded on the same covenant, has always been administered through *the same Mediator*. The Saviour now, was the *Angel of the covenant* then, whose blood was shed from the foundation of the world. Sinners were saved then in the same way as they are saved now, and by the same Saviour. Since God and man have had dealings with each other, there has been only one Mediator between God and Man, the man Christ Jesus, and in every age men have come to the Father by Him.

The Church is represented as an *Olive tree*, (Rom. xi., 16-21), and though some branches have been lopped off, and others grafted in, *the identity of the tree* has not been destroyed. As the Apostle argues, the same root and trunk continue, the same olive tree under the care of the same husbandman. The removal of the Jews because of their unbelief and the bringing in of the Gentiles, are just the lopping off of one branch to make room for another *on the same stem*, and by-and-bye both will grow together again on the same trunk and from the same root.

The prophecies and promises made to the Church are the same, and cover her whole history from the beginning till the consummation of all things. Only one Church is embraced which was to arise and shine, and Gentiles come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising. The Old Testament Church

was to be enlarged but not abrogated. "Then shalt thou see and flow together and be enlarged because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee." This one Church was to be built on a foundation composed of both *Prophets* and *Apostles*, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. All the Gentiles are fellow-heirs of the *same body*, and are partakers of Christ by the Gospel. Abraham's seed are Christ's children, and Christ's children are Abraham's seed. They who are of faith the same are the children of Abraham, Gal. iii., 29. God promised that in Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed; and this was the promise unto which "Our twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night hope to come." Hence it is said, the blessing of Abraham is come upon us.

The commonwealth of Israel was the Church. It is called the church in the wilderness, Acts vii., 38. The Hebrews were chosen from among the other nations not for *political* but *religious* purposes. They were to be the depositaries of the truth, to whom were committed the oracles of God. To them as God's covenant people pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service, and the promises, Rom. ix., 4. The pious Hebrews are described as those who hoped in Christ before his advent, Eph. i., 12. Nothing

more spiritual can be affirmed of the Church now ! Surely that was a spiritual church whose members are said : (1) To have believed on Christ ; (2) To have sought a heavenly country ; (3) Were justified by faith ; (4) Of whom the world was not worthy ; (5) For whom God had prepared a city ; (6) Who are now set down at the right hand of God. All this was said of the members of the Old Covenant, and what more can be said of the Church now ?

God pointed Abraham to the stars, and asked if he could count them—"So shall thy seed be for multitude." He asked him to look at the sand lying by the sea-shore, and again said—"So shall thy seed be for multitude." Now, what seed is meant ? His descent *by blood*, or *by faith* ? The *natural Jew*, or *the spiritual* ? Israel after *the flesh*, or Israel after *the spirit* ? Sure it must mean the latter, for the Jews have never been a numerous nation ; how few in numbers when compared to China, India, Russia, or Britain ! Of what value would the covenant be if it were only Abraham's natural descent, for there have been many nations more numerous and powerful without any covenant ? But they who believe in Christ are the children of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise. Abraham is the father of the faithful, and his spiritual children are to be as the sand for multitude,—"A great multitude which no man can number."

The saints of old worshipped the same God as we do now, and came to Him through the same way of life; and all through the spiritual history of the world there has been the same dependence on the same Holy Spirit, while God's true children have had the same experience of his grace; they sang the same songs of praise, and presented the same petitions. And how can that be a different Church which is bound to the Church now by so many spiritual ties that meant the same then as now.—One God and Father of all, one Mediator and Saviour, one Spirit of Life, one inward grace and experience, one hope and home in all ages. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is our covenant God; and our Saviour to-day was the Saviour of all his Saints who lived before His Advent.

If any further proof were needed to show that the Christian Church was a continuation of the patriarchal or Abrahamic, we have such proof in the fact that *the Apostles never attempted to set up any new organization, but built on a foundation already laid.* All admit that the New Testament era opened fully out on the day of Pentecost. But we find the first Christian Church existing before that day, and convened by authority to exercise one of the highest functions belonging to any church, viz., to choose an Apostle in the place of Judas. These 120 disciples

formed the membership of the first Christian Church, and we find them all assembled again on the day of Pentecost, all of one accord in one place. To this membership the 3,000 were added. But neither the apostles, nor yet the 120 disciples, ever received water baptism, but were accepted without it, and why? Because they had already been received into the Church, and their membership recognized by circumcision, and they had never lost their standing by rejection of Christ, but passed over from the membership of the Old, into the New Testament Church, fully recognized by the rite which had the same signification that baptism was to have now.

When, four days before his death, Christ pronounced the sentence of excommunication on the people for their apostacy, it did not affect those who were in good standing when Christ was crucified, and who carried their membership from the one Church to the other. And around this nucleus the New Testament Church was gathered, and was composed of members, some of whom had been received by *circumcision* under the former dispensation, and others by *baptism* under the new; yet all now stood on equal terms in the same Church.

But it may be asked, "Why, then, were those Jews baptized who afterwards believed the Gospel, when they, too, had already received the rite of circumcision,

if this meant the same as baptism? When we receive excommunicated members back again into the Church, we do not re-baptize them. But the cases are not parallel. The unbelieving Jews had been cut off under a former dispensation, and during the time of their separation and exclusion from the Church of God, baptism had been instituted in the place of circumcision as the initiatory rite into the Christian Church. And now, when on repentance and faith they seek admission, they submit and receive the new rite that recognizes their membership, *i.e.*, it was during the time of their excommunication baptism was instituted, and now when they enter the Church they must enter as other Gentiles through Christian baptism. Hence the members gathered in on the day of Pentecost were added to a Church already existing and composed of the 120 members whose standing had been recognized long before, and which had never been lost, and seeing they were never outside of this one Church it was not necessary they should undergo the rite of reception now.

In short, there has been only one Church on earth existing under different dispensations. The God of Abraham is the covenant God of his people still, and all that Christ has done for the salvation of men was done as much for those who were under the first covenant (Heb. ix. 15) as for us. There has been

only one covenant or promise unto which the true Israel have constantly looked. This is the turning point of the whole question. As the blade, and ear, and corn, are in the earlier germ ; as the twig grows into a tree ; or as the boy grows into the man, and when he has reached man's estate is not a different person from what he was when a boy, so the Church is one at different periods of her growth and history. Infants were members of this Church once—they have never been removed—therefore, they are members still, for the mere lapse of time works no change on the characteristics and spiritual features of a Church that liveth and abideth forever : all the rights of her members are conserved.

INFANT CHURCH RELATIONS.

In the original constitution which God gave his Church, infant children were included among its members, as any one may see by a reference to the facts of the case. And this membership of children has never been withdrawn : there is no law of repeal anywhere to be found in subsequent legislation, or any change in this direction so much as hinted at : the rights then granted have never been abrogated. Therefore, infants have a right to membership still ; and if to membership then surely to baptism, as the sign and seal of the covenant which secures this right.

By divine appointment children had a place given them among the professed people of God, and this arrangement, which embraced children among her members, has never been changed ; those privileges, then given, have never since been withheld ; nor has the duty of parents in presenting their children to the Lord been denied. The seed of the righteous are still entitled to a place in the visible kingdom. Once the covenant embraced both believing parents and their seed, and the seal of the covenant was applied to both. If, therefore, such a change as the exclusion of one half of the membership of the Church had been effected, we might naturally have supposed that some mention would have been made of the fact. But we look in vain for any such indication. Instead of this, we find numerous intimations showing that the same order was to continue. Such a radical change as this would imply would have been noticed by both friend and foe. The Jews were proud of their covenant relations, and would have offered strenuous opposition to any seeming encroachment on their religious privileges. But we find not one word of complaint against the exclusion of infants from the membership of the Church ; because such exclusion has never taken place, and children are members of the Church still. Let them who say this right has been withdrawn point out to us the

abolishing act! It is not to be found in all the Bible, for the covenant which embraced infants was expressly called an *everlasting* covenant. And what was once a law in the Church, and has never been repealed, must be a law still. John Owen says, "God never had a Church on the earth without children being a part of it."

When proselytes were circumcised on a profession of faith, and received among the people of God, their children were received at the same time, and recognized as members in the visible Church. So in the New Testament, when parents were baptized their children were baptized with them. In every case where the head is known to have had a family, the *household* was received and baptized; *i.e.*, the Apostles never baptized the head of a home without baptizing all its inmates, and receiving the whole family into the Church. And I do not care to argue whether any children were present in these households or not. It is the form of expression that is the determining point. A household generally contains children, and this term could never have been used if it had not been customary for baptism to go by households, and that the head of a home carried the religion of the family with him, and when he believed, he *believed with all his house*.

We might draw a parallel between the two ordi-

nances as administered under the two dispensations. "When he was circumcised and his family." "When he was baptized and his family." The one followed as naturally as the other according to the tenor of the covenant. "You and your seed." "You and your children." *Households* were received into Christian fellowship in the New Testament Church, as in the Old, *on the faith of the head*. And it is worthy of notice that the *Syriac* version, one of the oldest and very best versions ever made, translates the passage, Acts xvi., 16, "When she was baptized *and her children*." And the *Coptic*, another old version, gives the same rendering. We maintain that the Lord, in the New Testament Church, has made it both the duty and privilege of Christian parents to consecrate their children to Him through the ordinance of baptism, as believing parents consecrated their children in the Old Testament Church through the ordinance of circumcision.

Our Lord's command in Matt. xxviii, 19, contains these three elements: (1) Disciple the nations, (2) Baptise them, (3) Teach them. And the Apostles, acting under inspired authority, would continue to disciple the nations as had always been done from the beginning of the Church's history; and to include the children along with their parents in the membership of the Church, more especially as no hint of

a change had ever been given. Had the command been, "Go and *circumcise* them," etc., there would not have been a shadow of doubt on the subject as to who were to be the proper subjects of circumcision, as it had always been parents and children. But in what sense is the case changed when baptism is substituted for circumcision? The Jews would never imagine that the New Testament Church was to be narrower and more exclusive than the Old had been. And when they heard Peter urge them to come forward and be baptized, for the promise was to them and to their children, who would dream of denying the right to infants? And when it was seen that baptism had come in the place of circumcision, the very instinct of the Jewish parent would prompt him to bring his child for baptism, as he had been accustomed to do for circumcision, and we find that everything in the inspired record agrees with this supposition. If children could be, and were, disciplined through the rite of circumcision, why should they not be disciplined through the right of baptism? No one dreamt that the command to circumcise was meant to exclude children, for the practice of the Church for two thousand years would determine this point. And yet the requirements for circumcision were the same as for baptism; for he who was circumcised was a debtor to do the whole law. But the command to

disciple and circumcise did not exclude children. How then can it be shown that the command to disciple and baptize necessarily excludes them? The fact is that *now*, under the New Testament, as *then*, under the Old, children are embraced within the visible kingdom.

Before He was Himself conscious of it, the child Jesus was, by the express wish and act of His parents, shut in by holy rites within the visible Church of God ; and when He came to mature years He lovingly took the place their faith had given Him, and grew up *within* the house of God, and not *without*, as, alas ! so many of our young people do. The House of God was a joy to Him, and never on any Sabbath was His place seen to be empty. How thoroughly He could appropriate David's words, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles. . . . My soul longeth for the courts of the Lord. . . . One day in Thy house is better than a thousand."

It is, surely, a most impressive thought that Christianity is thus seen bending over the cradle of the infant, and claiming it for the Good Shepherd. And how comforting and helpful to the faith and love of the parents, that, when feeling their responsibility and helplessness most, they can commit their charge to Him, and plead the covenant mercies he has promised to bestow ! The parent's heart is filled with

gratitude to Him who allows his sacred name to be named over them so early, and enables them to cast their greatest care upon Him. Christ's care and love for little children were wonderful: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." What words of comfort from the lips of Christ! His act in pressing them to His heart and fondling them on His knee was intended to mean all that the strongest faith takes out of it. While His reason for His act is the most inspiring of all—"For of such is the kingdom of heaven." As he took up one after another, his right hand, disengaged, was laid upon the little head of each, and He (giving the full force of the original) *fervently blesses them*. Who then can doubt the nature of the relation which the Good Shepherd meant should ever exist between Himself and the lambs of His flock? To disfranchise them is to wrong the Saviour in His own house and rob Him of half His charge—OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.



THE CHILDREN OF THE CHURCH.

Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.—Mark x. 14-16.

Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord.—Ps. cxxvii. 3.

Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in nowise enter therein.—Luke xviii. 17.

He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.—Luke i. 15.

From a *little* child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.—2 Tim. iii. 15.

THE CHILDREN OF THE CHURCH.

One of the topics of discussion at a recent Sabbath school convention was, "How to retain the older scholars in the school and attach them permanently to the Church." The theme thus suggested is one of profound practical importance, and touches a weak point in our modern Church life. It is, however, only another way of stating, How best to promote *the growth in grace* of our children, and the gradual maturing of their Christian character, carrying out the Apostle's command, and bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

This is a question that appeals very directly to all Christian people, and especially to those who are engaged in the practical work of the Church. It is a question of unspeakable moment to the young themselves which we seek to press upon their earnest consideration, and we would ask them to ponder the significance of the relation they sustain, and the nature of Christian nurture under which they are placed.

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN NURTURE.

The settling of this question settles also the relation which the children sustain to the Church, and to Christ her Head. As to the nature of Christian nurture, Paul's teaching is very explicit. He says, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Teach them that they are *holy* to the Lord ; that they belong to Him ; and as members of His Church, not living for future conversion, but growing up Christians, and never knowing themselves to be anything else. The Head of the Church makes no provision for our growing up in sin, and living for future adoption into the number of His people. There is no specific arrangement, nor binding necessity for our breaking loose from those tender, loving bonds He throws around us in our infancy, and turning our backs on Him who claims us as His own. A very common opinion is, that, till such time as we get *a new heart* later in life, we are of the devil. And yet is not the testimony of Scripture explicit that from our childhood Christ claims our love and obedience? There can be no doubt that the normal standard of Christian life and growth is to be Christ's in our *infancy*, as John the Baptist was, who was consecrated to the Lord from his mother's womb ; to be His in our *boyhood*, as Timothy was, who knew the Scriptures from a little child ; and to be His in *our whole life*, as

Samuel, Simeon, Eunice, and the great majority of all Christ's people, who have grown up, not as aliens, but subjects of His grace, in harmony with the purpose of our Lord, and the true nature of Christian culture.

We would put the question to all earnest children of God and ask them which they would have preferred, viz.:—to grow up in a life of sin and spend their best days in alienation from the Saviour, and then, in the evening, to find their way into the fold? Or, to grow up from childhood in the nurture of the Lord, subjects of His grace all their days, never knowing separation from His love, even in infancy lambs of His flock, having throughout life only the experiences of God's children? There can only be one answer as to which of these two modes of growth is preferable and most in accordance with the Scripture plan; nor can there be any question as to which of the two is Christian nurture.

Nowhere is Christian character more beautiful, and never are the fruits of our faith riper, than, when they have matured through the long day of life under the sunshine of our Father's love. It is a blessed thing to feel that the superstructure of all our experiences in grace have had their foundation principles laid in a sanctified childhood; that the blossoms and fruit of our mature Christian life—mellow and ripe—have their roots in the grace bestowed in our early years.

And as the buds and blossoms of spring give promise of the clustering fruits of autumn, so our baptized childhood should be the earnest of the ingathering of those sheaves on the great harvest-day amid the joy of heaven. And this oneness of Christian life and character from childhood onward is the special promise of God to the faith of His people, and one of the provisions of His covenant of grace. For this end He has given the children a place in His Church, and He has laid special obligations upon her concerning them. "Feed my lambs; bring them up in the nurture of the Lord; train them in the way they should go." He who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," would never gather a flock without lambs, or make provision for gathering the flock away from the lambs. He who said, "Feed my sheep," said also "Feed my *lambs*," and heavy must be the condemnation where this solemn duty is neglected.

"It is no use your trying to be good till you have got a new heart," said a Sabbath-school teacher to a bright little girl in her class. But a child cannot, and need not, understand this technical language, and can have no conscious experience corresponding to it. And the only inference that a child could draw is—"that it is no use trying to be good till some-

thing has happened, and been understood, above her present age." Why then should she try? The intention of such a teacher may be well meaning, but it is both mistaken and cruel, and such teaching accounts for many of the sad failures we see. Why not rather seek to encourage the child to right feeling, and to learn to love her Heavenly Father, as she has learned to love her earthly? And may not the Spirit bless such teaching to the forming of right principles in the heart of a child as in that of an adult?

OUR AIM AND EXPECTATION.

If this be the place given to children—lambs of the flock—and such the arrangements of Christ for their Christian nurture, why then should the growth of our children in Christian knowledge and experience be not only our *aim*, and earnest *expectation* that these happy results will surely follow; but also our realized joy that our children are found walking in the truth and putting on one feature of discipleship after another? And why are these expectations, that have such Scripture warrant, so often disappointed? The Church would do well to ponder the question, "How is it that so many who ought to be in the Church, are to-day swelling the ranks of sin?" Is it not an inspiring thought that the seal of the Spirit can be, and often has been, laid upon the

life of a little child, as we are expressly told it was laid in the case of John the Baptist ; and there was nothing special in his case that makes it impossible to be the privilege of children generally.

An eminent minister of New York was telling the Rev. L. W. Bacon the story of his religious experience. Shortly after, Mr. Bacon met the venerable father of his eminent friend. "Your son has been telling me the story of his religious life." "Oh no, he hasn't," replied the good old man: "he can't remember that story. Only his mother and myself can tell it. It goes back to his cradle." And so is it in the case of thousands upon thousands ; the story of their religious life "goes back to their cradle," and they have been sanctified to the Lord from their mother's womb.

Laying aside for a moment the consideration of the divine side, viz., the purpose, relation and dealings of Christ, let us look at the human, and even then we affirm that a very young child can know the Saviour and learn to love Him. Has God's Spirit nothing to do in the hearts of children, no presidency or power of grace there ? Is this the only sphere from which He is excluded ? The thought is monstrous ! True, a child's knowledge of Christ and its experiences must be a *child's* knowledge, very germinal and imperfect, but not the less real on that account.

Even adults are not saved because their faith is strong and their experiences very mature, but because Christ is rich in mercy, and His grace has availed for them. And so we think of the safety of a lamb chiefly because it is in the bosom of the Good Shepherd, who has His everlasting arms around it.

We ask, is this the place and character that the Church usually gives her children? And do Christian parents regard them as members of the visible Church, and as such, holy to the Lord? And is their growth in grace the expectation commonly formed of them? And does their treatment of them correspond to this character attaching to them? Or, are they not rather looked upon as of the world growing up for future conversion? Do not the conception and treatment of Christian parents in numberless instances practically place their children outside of God's covenant mercies? And have they not rather, by these false methods and mistaken judgments, often trampled out the first embers of faith smouldering in their hearts? Have they been on the alert to welcome the first indications of pious feeling? Have they not rather by false tests, and by throwing a gloom over religious life and duty, discouraged and alienated the young, and put obstacles in the way of their progress Christward? It can never be a delightful thought to those who are in covenant relation with the Saviour to

think of their children as separated from them! Themselves in the life-boat, but their little ones sinking in the sea, with the prospect of only one here and there being saved! No, the promise, that is to us *and to our children*, puts both within the covenant, and it is our privilege as it ought to be our unspeakable joy, to regard our children as the Lord's heritage, and never to regard them as anything else than His, till they, by an after wicked life, persisted in, force us to change our judgment of them. I regard my children as belonging to the Lord now, and I will never believe anything else of them till I cannot help it.

There are those who put their children outside of the Church and of God's covenant mercies, and who class them all as children of the devil. And the more earnest these parents are, the more will they ponder the question, "Will God in the exercise of His sovereign grace ever convert my child and bring him into the fold, or will he remain a child of the devil for ever? God's wrath and curse are upon its little soul to-day, will they abide till the day of final doom?" To think thus of my child would hang the weight of death around my heart, and compel me to live in the most terrible of all uncertainties! But we have not so learned Christ, who has taught us to regard our children as the lambs of His flock, as in His church and among His people; and as such, *holy* to the

Lord, growing up in His nurture and for His Kingdom; and nothing short of an abandoned after-life can rob us of this hope and joy. And O what a multitude of sins it would cover, if parents and the trainers of the young, would deepen these precious truths in the hearts and lives of the children of the Church!

THE CHRISTIAN HOME.

We must guard against that extreme *individualism* which is so prominent a feature of modern religious life, to the ignoring of those *organic* laws which bind all society together. The State, the Church, the congregation, the family, are all founded on organic conditions. In the home the child lies within the moral agency of the parents for years, and never wholly escapes it. The connection is so close as to lead us to believe that the faith and Christian life of the parent will become those of the child; and that if we live a Christian life before them, and fill our home with a Christian atmosphere, the law of the spirit of life will include our children along with ourselves.*

In the matter of religion the heads of a home carry their children with them. (This I hope to show in the next chapter). And in any change of religion the children are involved with their parents. Hence the

* See on this point Bushnell's "Christian Nurture."

form of language, "He rejoiced in God *with all his house.*" The *home* is the church of childhood, and no school of training can take the place of that great university of nature, the Christian home, where the mother is the chief professor, whose lessons and influence go deeper than any they will meet afterwards. In this school grace may dawn in the hearts of the young, in other and milder forms of experience than in those cases of conscious conversion from a life of sin ; and the former case is as much dependent upon, and a manifestation of the Spirit's working as the latter, and is the normal growth of Christian life and character. We do not affirm that every child that is so trained will grow up in grace ; but simply that this is the true ideal and aim of Christian culture, and that if the conditions were fulfilled, the failures would be far fewer than many suppose. Many godly parents have wayward children, just because many godly parents are foolish, and manifest many weak traits of character. They work under false ideas, by wrong methods, and exhibit a harsh, forbidding manner sufficient to account for all the failures we deplore.

Where we make our home and our churches schools of early Christian nurture ; pray and work, teach and expect our children to grow as plants in the house of the Lord, not one in ten will fall away, nor yet be able to remember a time when they became Christian,

for they have never been anything else. They have grown into their Christian life as they grew into their maturity. As a matter of fact, children have been so trained : this, indeed, is the normal condition, and not exceptional. Baxter tells us, that, at one period of his life, he was greatly distressed because he could not recollect a time when any special, gracious change had taken place in him. He had been taught to expect a crisis, and a great decisive struggle, resulting in his conversion. And because this never came he imagined something must be wrong ; "Till I learned to know," to use his own words, "that education is as properly a means of grace as preaching." And he tells us he lived to thank God that he had learned to love and obey God so early, and had been led into the richer experiences of the Divine life, as he had been led into his physical and mental stature, by the uniform law of growth and gradual development. Spurgeon says, that of all he has admitted into the Church in childhood, he has not found one, who, in after life disgraced the Christian profession. And the uniform experience of every pastor is, that his own young people who have been trained in his Sabbath-school and Bible-class, are the most mature and helpful Christians, and those who will give him the least trouble, or cause the least anxiety.

NORMAL GROWTH.

It has been said that "The value, if not the possibility, of true Christian feeling, inwrought by the Holy Spirit, and developed gradually from childhood by Christian nurture, and concurrently with our intellectual growth, is too often lost sight of even among good people. The Christian life is generally so developed, so gradually moulded, as sometimes to preclude distinct statements of any time when our eyes were opened." The light from the Saviour's face came upon the soul as the morning comes—so gradually that no man can mark the moment when the first beams burst forth, yet so efficiently that none can doubt its presence. From a little germ beneath the soil our flowers and fruit bloom and ripen through the long summer day, slowly, yet surely, with the sacred progress which Nature manifests. And so is it with the plants which our Father has planted in His own garden amid the sunshine and glory of His day of grace. The life of a young disciple often ripens in a way that prevents us from mapping out the manner or order of its progress in the soul, but none, not even we ourselves, can doubt its reality. None of us can remember the day we were born, or when a new existence began that is to continue forever; far less can anyone describe the experience of the beginning of those years through which we have

lived. Nor can the great majority tell the day they were born of the Spirit, or describe the beginning of life in the soul ; and yet it may be no less real in the one case than in the other.

This fact is with many unduly ignored, and altogether underrated as a practical question, to the injury of Christ's people, and especially the most tender and humble of His flock. Require of every disciple an exposition of the manner of his spiritual awakening as a proof that he is Christ's, and you discourage many of His best people, and unnecessarily and dangerously imbue others with misconceptions concerning the whole subject. By this mechanical regulation, which Christ Himself never imposed, and by a false ideal of what some call Christian experience, we too often put without the fold the lambs of the flock ; we put them so far without, that immense numbers of them are lost, past all recovery, on the dark mountains of sin.

Have you ever seen the unveiling of a statue, on some public occasion, before a great multitude ? When, at the given signal, the nicely adjusted covering was dropped, it seemed as if it had sprung into being at that very moment. But all know, and none better than the sculptor, how long and how painfully he has laboured to shape its beauty out of the rude mass at the beginning. So is it with the image of

Christ within us. Most are trained from their infancy into the Christian life, so that when the disclosure comes, it is not the revelation of something that has newly taken place, but more like the unveiling of a statue on some public square, a revelation of something that has been there for a length of time. To some it seems as if it had sprung into being then and there, while in reality it has been the work of the chisel and the mallet for months and years, under the fashioning power of the Spirit of God. The disclosure was sudden, but the foundation and workmanship were not. "A child that is of a devout and loving nature, brought up at the knee of a devout and loving mother, is early inclined to God, and it is so trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord that it never knows, and never ought to know, the time when it did not think of God as its Heavenly Father, and of belonging to Christ." A child brought up in this way grows year by year, and step by step, and becomes an earnest Christian, and no one, not even himself, can tell precisely when the change came. Our Christian character to-day is the outcome and result of all that has gone before, and we have been shaped and moulded by all the influences, ten thousand in number, that have touched us. Unnumbered drops have fallen on the ground, you cannot tell where ; but, as the result, the fields are green. You

see them, and rejoice in the fact. So it is with our hearts beneath the dew of heaven. "The wind bloweth," etc.

When I was being licensed by the Presbytery of Toronto to preach the Gospel, an incident which I may relate occurred that illustrates this part of our subject. I had been examined on the usual subjects, Latin, Greek, Theology, etc., and now the subject of *personal religion* was announced, and this was entrusted to an elder who had hitherto taken no part in the examinations. And he, like an earnest, devout man, wishing to go to the root of the matter at once, asked me, "Do you think you have ever been converted?" To this I replied, that, according to his understanding of the matter, I did not think I ever had been. This answer seemed for a moment to bar my way in the good man's judgment, till a member of the court came to my relief, and framed a question which I could answer easily; but I am sure the elder had grave doubts about me. I never put the question "Have you been converted?" to my young people who have grown up within the Church, been religiously trained, and have all along been giving evidences that they were growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus. When such seek full communion with the Church, I look over their whole past life, with all its attendant circumstances, and if

convinced of the sincerity of their desire to obey Christ, and of their interest in Him, though that interest may be imperfectly spoken, I would never dream of troubling them with a question that does not apply to them. Our Master would not break the bruised reed, but tenderly nourished into greater strength the beginnings of faith, and so must we. By their fruits ye shall know them ; for the Spirit, by the fruits which He produces, makes His presence manifest wherever He resides.

BAPTIZED CHILDREN ARE MEMBERS OF THE
CHURCH TO BE TRAINED FOR CHRIST.

The great majority of believers are regenerated in infancy, and what is often regarded as their after conversion is only the blossoming out into fuller manifestation of a life received from above, long before. The church membership of children is put in clear, forcible terms by Dr. Atwater who says :—
“They should be taught to feel, act and live as becomes those who are the Lord’s ; not merely that it is wrong and perilous to be and do otherwise, which is true of all, whether within or without the Church, but that such a course is inconsistent with their position as members of the visible Church, placed in it by the mercy of God, and bound to His service by vows made for them by their parents, whose duty

and privilege it was thus to act for them, and give them a place among the people of God until they became competent in their own persons, and of their own choice to act, either to retain or renounce it." Dr. J. W. Alexander says "Children born within the pale of the visible Church, and dedicated to God in baptism, are to be taught to hate sin, to fear God, to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. And when they arrive at years of discretion, it behoves every one of them to consider the duty of ratifying the vows made in their name by a personal avowal of allegiance to Christ. The case of such is, therefore, widely different from that of the world without."

Hence the propriety of the position laid down in "The Directory for Public Worship," which says, "Children born within the pale of the visible Church, and dedicated to the Lord in baptism, when they come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, ought to be informed that it is their duty and privilege to come to the table of the Lord." And the Supper is not offered, as a medal is given, for superior merit, but as a means of grace to help the feeble and timid on their way.

How many of our young people really understand their true relation to Christ and His people, as being

members of His Church from birth? Does the Church herself ordinarily regard these little ones and all the young people growing up under her care as *members* or as *worldlings*? The theory which is expressed in our symbolic books is Scriptural, but our present practice is very inconsistent, and our *official* language quite misleading. We speak of the young and treat them as being of the world, and when they apply for sealing ordinances it is called "*joining the Church*," instead of assuming their full responsibilities and advancing in their privilege. There is a little book by Rev. Alexander Balloch Grosart, called "*Joining the Church*." It is dedicated to Rev. Andrew Bonar, and is intended as a guide to the minister in his dealings with intending young communicants. In his opening remarks he says "I suppose the applicant to have called upon the minister and to have expressed a wish to '*join the Church*.'" And at his first visit the applicant is made to say "You will remember, sir, that I wish to '*join the Church*.'" This language is most misleading, and a Free Church minister ought to have known better than to use it in this connection. A man does not join his country when he comes of age and casts his first vote, nor, again, do our young people join the Church when they come for the first time to the table of the Lord. They are members of the Church by birthright, and

their peril is in breaking away from, and not in seeking closer union. Let no Presbyterian ever be so false to his principles as to speak of joining the Church with reference to the young. Such language fails to make manifest and emphasize the Church membership of children.*

Some say this makes our Church membership rest on natural descent and not on the work of the Spirit. But if God has given the child that relation and standing, and promised to bless them to the child's enlightenment ; if He has said that He both can and will own parental instruction to the child's growth in grace, it is derogatory to God's wisdom and goodness to doubt this. If God says that the child's connection with the visible Church will be to him the school of Christ, where he will be taught saving truth, and grow up a member of the Church invisible, why should any one doubt this, and act as if God would not keep His promise? We greatly dishonour God when we doubt His word, and we injure ourselves and our children when we change the plans of His grace.

HOW THE CHURCH MUST INCREASE.

There are those who, by periodical revivals, gather in her members, and their actions imply that only in

* A call is said to be signed by so many *members* and *adherents* ; this language is open to the same objection.

this way, by conquests from the world, can she grow. But while admitting this as one way, we must not seek to live by conquest only, but by internal growth ; and the longer the Church is established the more prominent will this feature become. Hitherto we have too much forgotten this latter and normal mode of growth, and expected only the former. Our piety is fiery and spasmodic. We think of the Church as besieged, and occasionally making sallies upon the enemy. We try to *get up revivals*. All true revivals come down. We expect the Church to grow by conquest, and overlook the fact that its chief increase is from *within* and by *growth*. We think nothing is being done unless we have stir, excitement, multiplied instrumentalities, and elaborate machinery. We seek to be pious and devoted on certain great occasions, and forget that the chief fund of increase is in the bosom of the Church herself, and that the longer she is established conversions from the world will become less and less frequent, and growth in grace more and more realized and rejoiced in. When children are trained up in the way they should go, they swell the ranks of the Church as her chief element of increase. Not till religion comes into the home will it thoroughly permeate the life. This principle is so evident and Scriptural, that in the *Confessions* of the four great historic Churches—Greek, Latin, Lutheran, and Re-

formed—the children of Christians are spoken of as members of the visible Church with their parent — “All who profess the true religion *together with their children.*”

Steady growth in all the elements of Christian life and progress; additions at every communion from the older scholars in the Sabbath school and Bible classes; the Lord adding daily such as shall be saved; fruitful results from the ordinary means of grace, nothing unusual or special, but all life and spiritual movement, and the young daily learning to walk in the truth and living to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things—let no congregation grow weary with such evident visitations of the Spirit as these, or long for any other proof of a revival. This is the way the Church grows, firmly knit together in the bonds of love. We heard once of a complaint being made against a certain congregation that it had never had a revival of religion for forty years. While others, it was said, had enjoyed an outpouring of the Spirit every winter, this particular congregation had remained unvisited. Yet the objector went on to say: “We must admit that the attendance keeps large, and the number of its communicants has continually and steadily increased; all the people seem devout, sincere, and active in the work of the Lord. Few congregations have shown the same liberality, or

taken a more active part in every good work ; their contributions to missions have exceeded all others, they have kept thoroughly organized, and everyone seems to be at his post, and to be doing his work faithfully. There have been no special conversions, and yet the young people and children of the Church have, naturally, and very generally, stepped into the place of their fathers. There has always been a wonderful degree of moral force about the congregation, that has leavened the community." Such was the testimony borne in regard to it, and yet in the face of all this, it was said this congregation had not been blessed by a revival of religion. But, surely, this is the kind of revival we work and pray for, and long to see—a continued, gracious outpouring of God's Spirit on every meeting and through all the agencies. A revival that keeps every one at his post and doing his work earnestly : this is, indeed, the true type of Christian advancement. Such a congregation as this is a model for all others, and one after our own heart. What an honour to be the minister of such a congregation as this ; not a passing by, but an abiding ; not a temporary shower, but a ceaseless out-pouring ; God's Spirit so obviously owning the work as to keep the ranks filled ; the people zealous, liberal, devout, with the lambs of the flock abiding in the fold, and drinking the sincere milk of the Word. What other

or clearer proof than this does the Church need of God's gracious presence, and the Spirit's reviving power? Instead of regarding such congregations as unvisited, or deprived of quickening grace, because there has been nothing spasmodic or unusual, we find in all this the proof that the revival has been continuous, and we take such congregations as the true type of Church life and spiritual growth. Such a condition of things should never be deprecated, as it is the normal growth of the Church. O that the Spirit may be poured out on each service, and continue His loving kindness to us, that we may grow as trees planted by the rivers of water !

SPIRITUAL LIFE AND PROGRESS.

It is our common regret that so many of our young people grow up and fail to take their places at the table of the Lord, or even in the Church, a course contrary to what we might expect naturally to follow religious home training. Many of the young count themselves out, and take the place and assume the character of strangers to the covenant of promise. This sad tendency is helped in part by a wrong mode of representation that I cannot help thinking is very hurtful, and it is used by many who ought to know better. They speak, as I have said, of the young as "joining the Church," and represent it as an *introduction* to, instead of an *advancement* in, their spiritual life,

and taking the place that of right belongs to them as children of the Church. Our children, and the young people of our Christian homes, ought to be taught and made to feel that they are members of the visible Church of Christ by birthright, and have been recognized by baptism. From their childhood they have been under the laws of His house, and their peril is in breaking away and not in seeking closer union. As this is the place Christ has given them, and such their corresponding responsibilities, why is it that we do not more frequently see the young of our Sabbath schools and Bible-classes pass into the full membership of the Church? It is, I am persuaded due largely to false ideas and false teaching on this subject, and the young are treated as being outside covenant relations, and in no sense different from the heathen. But to put forth such a view is to pour contempt on one of our fundamental positions. It is just here where all churches fail in their mission, and lose their hold on the young. It should be the anxious care and constant aim of the Church that the blessing of Christ may come upon her young, that our sons may be as plants, grown up in their youth, and our daughters as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace; and nothing less than progress in spiritual life should satisfy those who are sowing the good seed of the kingdom.

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THE FAMILIES OF THE CHURCH.

Come thou and *all thy house* into the ark, for *thee* have I seen righteous before me in this generation.—Gen. vii., 1.

For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.—Gen. xviii., 19.

And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.—Mal. iv., 6.

I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.—Jer. xxxi., 1.

. . . . Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.—1 Cor. vii., 14.

THE FAMILIES OF THE CHURCH.

No man liveth to himself ; we are so placed together in life that we necessarily affect one another. If we fall, others are pulled down with us, and if we rise, we help to lift up those with whom we are associated. More especially is this the case in the *family*, where the head of the home can do so much either to make or mar it ; the sins of the fathers being visited on their children to the third and fourth generation, while their faith follows thousands of them that love God and keep His commandments. The sin and neglect of the parents carry the children away from God, and forfeit their standing and privileges before Him ; while the faith of the parents brings the children near to God.

THE REPRESENTATIVE PRINCIPLE.

This is one of the commonplaces in theology. God has, in His all-wise and merciful arrangements, made the standing of the child in civil, social, and sacred things, to depend upon that of the parent.

Every covenant which God has made with man has included the *child* with the parent, and it has been the divine purpose to deal with the *family* rather than with individuals ; *e.g.*, in the *Covenant of Works* with Adam, when life was promised on condition of obedience, Adam represented his posterity. "The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression." So also in the *Covenant of Grace* through a Redeemer, Christ represented His people, and acted for them ; and the same principle of representation runs through every subsequent renewal and unfolding of that covenant. In the covenant of protection made with Noah, his *posterity* are included, "And God spake unto Noah and his sons saying, And I, behold I establish my covenant with you, and with *your seed after you*," etc., Gen. ix. 9-17. Of this covenant the bow in the cloud was the sign and seal to him and his posterity that God would never again destroy the earth with a flood. It is the same principle of parents representing their children that is contained in the Covenant of Grace made with Abraham, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant to be a God unto thee, and to *thy seed after thee*."

Gen. xvii., 7. And in the renewal of the same covenant with Israel through Moses, even the little children are included ; it is still the same principle of "*you and your seed.*" "Ye stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God ; your captains of your tribes, your elders and your officers, with all the men of Israel, *your little ones*, your wives, and the stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of wood unto the drawer of water, that thou shouldst enter into the covenant with the Lord thy God, and into the oath which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day, that He may establish thee to-day for a people unto Himself, and that He may be unto thee a God, as He hath said unto thee and as He hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob." Deut. xxix., 10-13. And in the opening sermon of the New Testament dispensation, when the Church was *remodelled*—not *instituted*—the same gracious principle is proclaimed, "The promise is *to you and to your children.*" Acts ii., 39. "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. xix. 14. While on the ground of this established principle and permanent relationship the solemn injunction of the Master to His Church is, "*Feed my lambs.*"

PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

The former represent and include the latter. In the Old Testament the terms were, "*you and your seed*"; and in the New Testament, which is the same church visited, comforted and purified, the terms are, "*you and your children.*" And this principle is the key-note of the Bible on this subject. In all His gracious dealings God has included children and brought them along with their parents within the scope of His promise. When His people of old stood before the mount to enter into covenant with Him, their *little ones* were there also to be included, and to enjoy the privileges with their parents. When God gave laws to His people, they were in the most solemn manner commanded to teach them diligently to their children. When the new dispensation was introduced and the Church took its New Testament form, the same principle was announced: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven;" the same great truth is declared: it is still "*you and your children.*" When the head of a home was circumcised on a profession of faith and received among the professed people of God, their children were received at the same time and counted members. So when parents were baptized their *households* were baptized with them, in every instance where children were known to exist. And wherever gospel duties are enjoined, and the worship of the

true God enforced, children are always included. They are always spoken of, and spoken to, as belonging to the Church, and so far as outward relationship and visible membership are concerned, as being Christians. Paul addresses his letter to the *saints* which are at Ephesus, and among those saints he includes children. "Children obey your parents in the Lord : for this is right. Honour thy father and mother ; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth," etc.—Eph. vi. 1-3. It is still "*you and your children.*"

Our children are subjects of the British nation as much as we are, protected in common with ourselves by the whole power of the law. They are growing up to assume the whole responsibilities, and to enjoy all the privileges of their citizenship, though as yet they are only minors. So are the children of believing parents members of the commonwealth of Israel through God's covenant incorporating them into His visible kingdom, with a view to their religious training for His spiritual and eternal kingdom ; that when they grow up they may assume all the responsibilities and rejoice in all the privileges of loyal subjects to the grace of Christ their King, related not merely to the external Church, but members of the Church invisible, having their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life. So in the Christian home the head

carries the members with it, and a parent's faith changes the character and relationship of that home ; brings the family under Christian training and influence ; gives it new hopes and new joys ; and covers it with the promises of salvation. From being a Jewish or a pagan household, the parent's faith in Christ changed it into a Christian home.

THE HOUSEHOLD COVENANT.

We have evidence of this truth in the answer which Paul gave to the question, so earnestly asked of him by the jailor : "What must I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house.*" All readily acquiesce in the first part of the answer, viz., that personal faith in a personal Saviour would save the soul. But when it is further affirmed that his faith would save his *house* as well as himself ; that it would bring his *family* along with him into covenant relations with the Saviour, then some doubt the doctrine, while others deny it utterly. Yet this is the affirmation that Paul makes, that the father's faith would save *both himself and his house.*

When the apostle declared that the *house* would be saved by the faith of its *head*, he did not mean to say—nor is this what he did say—that the jailor's faith would save his family in the same way as himself.

Neither is it a proper understanding of this passage to say that all he meant was, that the same way of salvation was open to his family that was open to him ; and that if they believed they would be saved as he would be saved ; that their faith would save them, as his faith had saved him. To take this view is to miss the force of the apostle's statement. It is not a satisfactory explanation to say that all that was meant was that salvation was open to his family on the very same terms that it was open to its head, "The same way open to them as to him."—*Alford*. This would declare nothing as being peculiar, or of special benefit, to them. If this were all, then were these children not one whit advantaged by the faith and Christian life of the father ; for in this sense salvation was open to all the Philippians, and, indeed, to the whole human race. But when Paul says, the faith of the father will save the *household*, it is of the *Household Covenant* the apostle speaks, according to the original promise, "*I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee* ; that covenant, according to whose terms my faith makes God to be not only my God, but also the God of my home and of my family. The faith of the jailor would bring his *household* along with himself into covenant relations with God ; it would give it a new character ; from being a pagan, it would now become a Christian home ; it would

confer on all the children the advantages and privileges of a household of faith ; it would cover it with a new light and glory ; it would breathe around it a new atmosphere, and confer new duties ; it would bring the home within the range of the Church of Christ according to the Abrahamic Covenant, and secure for the children the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In short, *it would save the house*, so that the children would grow up under Christian influences, which God has promised to bless to the salvation of our children. Hence all the other members were at once baptized on the faith of the father, and along with him. It was to be in the new dispensation, as in the old, the father's faith carried the children with him, and they were to be baptized and incorporated into the Church, as formerly the children of proselytes to the Jewish faith had always been.

It was so on the ground of this same covenant relation between parents and children—the head and its members—that Lydia's household was baptized. The Lord opened her heart ; she believed and was baptized and received into the Church. And on the ground of her professed faith, which gave her a right to bring her children to the Lord, they were baptized and received into the Christian Church along with their mother. God receives His people as households, "For the promise is to you, and to your children."

When Zacchæus, at the call of the Master, came down to receive the Lord at his house, the *home* was made a partaker of his salvation, and of all his new-born privileges. *That day salvation came to his house*; not merely to himself, but to his children. His receiving the Lord gave his home new relations, new privileges, new duties and new responsibilities; it became clothed in a new character, and was brought within the scope of the divine promises. His children would henceforth be committed to his way of life, and be made partakers of the father's hopes and joys. He would now bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, that they might be made partakers of a like precious faith with himself, and be recognized by God as the seed of the righteous.

God blesses the children for the father's sake: "Thee have I seen righteous, go thou and thy whole house into the ark." Not the righteous alone, but the *seed* of the righteous are to be blessed. The ark in which the parent is to be saved is meant for the family. Every Christian parent ought to live as if the ark and its salvation were meant by God for both themselves and their children. There is room in the ark for your child as well as for yourself, and you must train your families to live as those who have been separated from the world and are in the ark of safety.

Did not the pascal lamb, like God's own lamb, aim at the deliverance of families? Not persons but *houses* were sprinkled and saved. He smites the Egyptians and passed over the *houses* of Israel. Christ's blood to-day is to be sprinkled on our *homes*—it is still "a lamb for a house." And let it not be forgotten that each father sprinkled it on his own house, and thus saved both himself and his family, while the child of the Egyptian was involved in the unbelief of the father, and perished with him. God's promise is definite, let the parent's faith take hold of it, and like Abraham, not stagger at the promise through unbelief, confident that what God has promised he is able to perform. "Thou and thy seed." "Ye and your children." "Thou and thy house." "Thou and thy son." "As for me and my house," etc., such is the link binding father and child together in the divine arrangement.

THE FAMILY—THE UNIT OF CHURCH LIFE.

In this representative principle which we have been illustrating, there is nothing peculiar to the Church. The relation and standing of the child along with its parents are only what is common in every other sphere. In the most vital instances the standing of the parent is the standing of the child, and the act of the parents is the act of the child. If the parent becomes

a British subject, so do his children ; if he cross the lines and take the oath of allegiance, his children become subjects of the United States. Even without the household covenant of God's gracious dealings the parents must naturally, and of necessity, carry their children with them in the course which they pursue, whether that course be good or bad. If I am a pagan, then my children are brought up pagans ; if a Mohammedan, then they grow up Mohammedans ; if a Mormon, then my children are committed to that gross system ; there is no help for them ; and if a Roman Catholic, they are trained as Roman Catholics ; whatever branch of the Protestant faith I profess, my children are trained in the same. If I am an earnest and loving disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, my first care—as in the case of Lydia—will be for those who are dependent upon me that they too may grow up in the fear of the Lord, and the promise is—a promise I take home to my heart—that we shall all be bound together as a family in the bundle of life. In all these instances it is still "*You and your children.*" How then can any parent neglect this great salvation, when he sees his family so seriously involved in the consequences of his life and conduct, committed, in fact, to his course ?

Some say this makes membership in the Church come as a matter of course, and not of grace. We

are told the cases are not parallel between the Church and the world, and membership in the Church and citizenship in an earthly kingdom. We are born into the latter by natural birth, and all so born are, as a matter of course, subjects of the nation. But with the kingdom of Christ or Church it is different ; here we must be born of the Spirit. " Except ye be born again," John iii., 7. We must have His grace realized in our hearts to make us members of His Church, and we have no right to receive any as members of the Church till we can receive from them this evidence of regeneration. Such is the teaching of some, but we believe it to be unscriptural and partial ; it looks at one side of a subject, which obviously has two sides. If true, it would exclude children, who, though they were subjects of grace from their birth, could not give us the proof of it. It is necessary also to remember the distinction between the *visible* and invisible Church. Membership in the former does not in all cases depend upon actual faith. As far as adults are concerned, they are received on a *profession* of faith, and this is all they can give, or the Church receive from them—a credible profession justified by a corresponding conduct. It was this test alone that Christ required, or allows any of his servants to demand ; while the Church membership of infants depends on that of their parents. They are along with their parents

members of God's visible kingdom which embraces believers and their seed, and, in consequence of their being members of the visible Church, the *Seal* of the covenant is to be applied to them in our day, as it was applied to Abraham's seed since his day.

There is an organic connection between parents and children, such, that the former not merely represent the latter, but the child lives within the moral sphere of the parent whose life and influence flows into the child many years after its birth, even as the sap flows into the branches from the trunk. The connection, in short, is such as to make it easy of belief that the faith and Christian life of the one will be propagated in the other. We do not so much think of Christians as *having* households, as of *Christian households* in which the father stands *surety* for his child before the Lord, as Judah, when pleading before the Governor of Egypt, said he stood surety to his father for Benjamin.—“I am surety for the lad.”

YOU AND YOUR SEED—YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN.

God sets us together in His Church as families.

We ask consideration of the first sermon preached in the Church under its New Testament form by Peter on the day of Pentecost. That morning, when the sun rose, the constitution of the Church as in-

cluding infant members, was, as it had always been. If any change is to be effected, now is the time to make it. Jewish parents had all along been accustomed to regard their children as being with them in the Church ; they did so that morning on the day of Pentecost. Will any intimation of a change be given before the day closes, or any new regulations that shall from this time forth exclude children ? Will Peter in his first sermon say anything that will make parents feel that their children will be in a worse position now than before, or even in any different position ? Or will his words be a sweet assurance to them that their children will continue to occupy the same place, and enjoy the same privileges in the Church ? “For the promise is unto *you and your children*, Acts ii., 39.

“*You and your seed*” had been the terms of the covenant all along ; Peter, now in his first sermon, says they are to be the terms of the covenant still. “‘You and your children’ together in the Church now as you have always been.” As Jews, their children had been always associated with them in the same privileges and blessings in the Church, and if they had to be deprived of these now, it is strange that the old covenant relation should be spoken of in this way. True, the language of the Apostle does not enjoin the baptism of infants, or even refer

directly to baptism. But it overthrows the notion that the children of believers are in a less favored position now, than they were under the old dispensation. If his words have any meaning, they do mean that the covenant of God with His people is to remain unchanged in this respect, and still to include infants with their parents. "*You and your children*," were the explicit terms of both. Besides, the New Testament Church is distinguished from the Old by its extension of privilege and not by its curtailment. And it would be passing strange if the faith of the parent in Christ would have the effect of cutting the child off from his Church, and leaving it outside and in a worse position than in a Church of more circumscribed privileges.

There is only one way in which the Jews could understand Peter's language, viz., that children would continue to hold, along with their parents, the same membership in the New Testament Church that they had done under the Old. And could you conceive of Peter, this holy man of God, speaking as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, using such language at the beginning of the Gospel, employing the very expression that would of necessity convey this idea, when he knew that, now, children were to have no relation to the Church whatever? If they were to be cast out, surely some explanation of the fact was

necessary. For two thousand years, "*you and your seed*" meant both together in the Church of God ; but now, "*you and your seed*" means parents and children are to be separated from each other in that same Church ! Who can believe such a thing ? Surely Peter's words at the commencement of the New Testament dispensation would be misleading if the *status* of children was not to be the same then as it had always been. If any change of relation had been contemplated, the Church would have been made aware of it. But there is no notice of a change, no complaint from any quarter, which would have been made if children had to be deprived of a privilege they had enjoyed all along in the Church. But instead of this, Peter declares that now, as formerly, the promise would still include both "*you and your seed.*"

"Were this idea of the import of infant baptism intelligently and faithfully carried out in the practical government of families and churches, we believe the amount of baptized apostacy would be greatly diminished ; that piety among parents and children would not only be more widely diffused, but more complete, elevated and symmetrical, as a vital force penetrating all the relations of life ; that the spectacle of devout men, fearing God with all their house would be as frequent as it is delightful ; that the Church would be ensured perpetually, and increase not merely by

external conquest and aggregation, but by internal growth, in the multiplication of those happy families of which we can say: 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. There, the Lord hath commanded His blessing, even life for evermore.' Such a cheering faith is warranted by the promises of God, which are none the less true, though our unbelief fails to realize them." (*Princeton Review*.)

EVILS OF A CONTRARY BELIEF.

Christian parents too often fail to take a clear and strong hold of the covenant of God made with them and their children. God's precious covenant—the sure mercies of David—on which we profess to rest when offering our children to God in baptism, dwindles, too frequently, into a mere ceremonial observance; the performing of a mere rite; it may be the giving of a name to the child; or at best an irksome duty. After consecrating our dear little ones to the Lord, calling them by His name, and committing them to His holy care, we still take for granted they are not His, and act on this supposition. We do not expect they will grow up in *grace*, but, as unconverted, they will grow up in sin, as children of the devil, till such time as they may chance to come under conviction and be brought in.

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them as aliens, we treat them as aliens, and in this way we lead them to believe themselves to be aliens, and they soon learn to accept the place and character we give them through our unbelief. By our false treatment of them we put them outside of the kingdom, and make their return all but an impossibility. There is nothing more unscriptural, and, consequently, nothing more hurtful to the Christian growth of our children than to teach them that they are not of the Church, but of the world. And nothing tends more powerfully to make them what we call them, than their disfranchisement from the family of God. If these are the unhallowed influences under which our families are growing up, when they come to maturity, the more serious of them will stand aloof, waiting, as it were, for God to enlist them; waiting for some mysterious call, some miraculous unfolding, some undefined influence to come upon them, some supernatural invitation given them to come in and take their place; instead of feeling—and acting on the feeling—that all along they have been under law to Christ, included as members in his visible Church, and held to Him by the tenderest and holiest of all ties; and that all their life long every blessed consideration unites to urge them to give themselves up to Christ at once, and know that they belong to Him as the Seed of the Righteous.

THE HOME, THE NURSERY OF THE CHURCH.

We must magnify the *family* in our ministry, and emphasize what is in great danger of being forgotten at the present time. We have dwelt on individual responsibility so long, the relation, duties, power and capacity of the unit, till we begin to feel that the individual is the exclusive unit of society and of the Church of God. But the Lord makes much of the family and of home life. He binds together parents and children in holy, tender bonds, so that the *head* saves the members. And thus, under the divine arrangement, one Christian generation produces another; faith is the root of faith, and the Church of the future is carried in the bowels of the Church of to-day. His offers of mercy run thus: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved *and thy house.*" A strong Church is made up of well-ordered families, where Christian fathers and mothers bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; where the home of the week has its counterpart in the home of the Sabbath. Such a home is the Church's true nursery, where the young men and maidens are glad when it is said to them: "Let us go into the house of the Lord." A home where the atmosphere is pure, where the plants grow under the fostering care of a bright and blessed influence, where the purity and peace of Christian nurture

come in as the benediction of heaven on the opening minds of the young, and is to them the type and prophecy of an eternal Sabbath, and of our home above.

What is the prevailing tone and sentiment of your home? Tell me this, and I will tell you the future of your children. Is the atmosphere surrounding it clear and healthy, or murky and full of miasma? Is the tone frivolous, mean, worldly, low? Is there a sad lack of savour and sweetness—the something better and higher? Or is your home warm, loving, true; refreshing and winsome as a May morning? Do father and mother show the children they are living for God? Then the future of your children is manifest, for blessed is that home that is in such a case.

A WORD TO THE HEADS OF THE HOME.

It is well to remember that it is in the recurring duties of each day where you exert your power, and breathe a fragrance around the life of your children, that will influence them all their days. It is not so much the discharge of technical duties either, as the spirit you manifest—your own life lived before them—that tells on the training and destiny of your home. Your children will *copy your example*, rather than *obey your precept*.

Don't forget that for some years you stand in God's

stead to them, and can do much either to mar or make them. And no one can take the place, or do the work of a parent, or relieve you of your home duties. Sabbath-schools are only *helps*, not *substitutes*. HOME TRAINING! what may it not accomplish under God for your child? What fruits may it not produce? But if you are not faithful to your solemn charge, what evils may not result from your neglect?

And see what care you bestow on other things of far less consequence than the godly upbringing of your offspring! How much time and pains you spend on training a vine to climb upward on the proper supports! What interest you take in your favourite plants, shrubs, or the flowers in your conservatory! How diligently and constantly you watch them, water them, prune them, protect them at nights against frosts! What a large share of your care and even affection they enlist!

But with how much greater zeal and loving earnestness should you watch over and train the *olive plants* in the nursery of your own home, that they may become the trees of righteousness, and grow up goodly cedars in the garden of God! Great must be the blame attaching to those parents whose neglect of duty is the occasion of their children's ruin. Keep constantly before them the scriptural model of Christian nurture, viz., that children are not only capable

of, but often are subjects of grace from their mother's womb, and their life-long steps have daily brought them nearer to the mountain of the Lord's house—a true growth in practical godliness. Teach your children these blessed truths in the bright days of their childhood. Tell them in the morning of life, that Christ requires them to be His, that the true place for the lambs is the fold of the Shepherd's love. Treat them as belonging to Christ, speak of, and to them as bearing this character ; make clear to their understanding and heart their place, their responsibilities, and duties to their Saviour, and this will be one of the most efficient means to make them what you long to have them to become. And your encouragements are great, for the Lord loves to hear, and is so ready to grant the requests of father and mother when pleading with Him for those whom He pressed to His bosom, and claimed to be His own.—Mark v. 22, 35, Matt. xv. 21.

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THE CARE AND NURTURE OF THE
CHURCH.

Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen: and lest they depart from thine heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons.—Deut. iv. 9.

And that they may teach their children.—Deut. iv. 10.

And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.—Eph. vi. 4.

Take this child away and nurse it for me and I will give thee thy wages.—Ex. ii. 9.

And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.—Ps. liv. 13.

THE CARE AND NURTURE OF THE CHURCH.

If we are to judge of the importance of early Christian training from the frequency with which it is enforced in the Bible, and the very earnest way it is spoken of, we must conclude that the subject is profoundly important, and involves consequences of transcendent interest, not only to the young themselves, or the Church of which they are members, but also to society at large. Both the Church and the world are concerned in the nurture of the young in the paths of virtue. Upon this question turn, directly and immediately, the character and welfare of society. Its strength and safety must be built on this foundation. The atmosphere which we daily breathe will be pure and healthful, or tainted with the miasma of sin, according as the children are trained in sin or in the way they should go.

As a prominent subject of divine teaching, the discussion of this theme is always timely. We would therefore speak a few words of hope and cheer, of

counsel and warning, that all teachers and trainers of the young may be encouraged in their works of faith and labours of love. There is the more need of calling attention to this matter at the present time, for many instructors—parents in their homes, and teachers in the Sabbath school—have false notions of Christian nurture, of their own responsibilities, the far-reaching consequences and enduring character of their work. And if any are led to take hold with a firmer hand, or a truer purpose in their heart, with more dependence on the Great Teacher, our labour will not have been in vain.

WE MUST BEGIN EARLY.

With great wisdom it is said, "*Train up a CHILD.*" Begin early and preoccupy the soil and sow it with the precious seed of the Word. Gather the children into the fold as the lambs of the flock, that they may be safe within these sacred enclosures. Teach them their place and privilege and duty, show them that Christ's claim is very tender and precious, and seek to draw out their affections toward Him. A very little child can understand the love of Christ through the love of its own mother, and, gathered in His bosom, they can learn to love Him.

To every reflecting, devout mind, there is not a more interesting object of contemplation than a little

child, whose frail bark has just begun to cross the mighty deeps of life's stormy sea. There is not a more critical period of life into which are gathered the very germs that determine the whole growth of the future. Even in that sleeping, unconscious, helpless babe, there are slumbering the elements of a greatness that partakes of the infinite, and a being has begun that knows no ending. That little child shall live when the heavens have grown old and weary, either in the light of our Father's face, or else estranged forever from the sweetness and glory of His home. And this alternative depends largely on the early training and nurture of that child.

When we see the buds of spring open, we can tell what they will become. The acorn can only grow into an oak. Your seeds and plants can only blossom into the flowers of the year—very beautiful, but of short duration. And yet how anxious you are regarding them? You watch them with interest, you water them, you weed them, you train them, you prune and support them if necessary. Many a mother takes great pains with her house plants, while her children are utterly neglected to grow up in wild confusion. Many a father has his thoughts on his business, in his office, or on some subject of study from morning to night, while his son is running uncared for on the streets. "If I had my life to live

over again," said a wealthy merchant, "my relations to my sons would be very different from what they have been. Probably I would make less money, but they and I would not be such strangers to each other." We watch and care for things that cannot grow beyond our expectation, but the child is uncared for whose future is in our hands, and who may become, according as we are faithful or remiss, either an adoring angel before the throne, or an outcast from that holy presence. The possibilities that are wrapped up in the breast of that little child are unspeakable. Yet a little, and reason shall light up that countenance, and irradiate that dull, sleepy eye! Yet a little, a passion shall sweep across that unconscious bosom! Yet a little, and its likes and dislikes, its enmity or fond affection, its upward or downward tendencies will reveal themselves. There is sublimity in the thought of a child's expanding powers, the little vessel preparing to weigh anchor and cross the mighty deeps of life! Shall it be wafted into the realms of bliss the harbour of all safety? Or, losing its moorings, will it be cast adrift on the hazardous sea of vice, and go down a wreck amid the wild surges? Children often play amid pitfalls hidden by flowers, and there is danger when the sky may be all sunshine; and hence the need of greater watchfulness, of tender, loving care, and the true nurture of the young. And

God has made the relation between parent and child to be so close—the child lying within the sphere of the moral life of the parents—that no other being is so dependent, so easily led or influenced. The mind of a child is as plastic as clay, ready to be moulded into any shape; sensitive like the photographer's plate, ready to take any impression; pliant and unsuspecting, waiting to be drawn out toward good or evil. Who, then, can over-estimate the influence for good or evil that every parent has over the life and destiny of each child?

EARLY IMPRESSIONS LASTING.

The impressions made in childhood, and the instructions then imparted, the habits formed in youth, and principles then adopted, grow into the very texture and constitution of the future man or woman, and become marked with all the rigidity and enduring nature of an original instinct. Childhood is the period of training, and every child will be trained in either one way or another from the period of earliest infancy. You can change the direction of a stream, if you touch it at its source: of a tree, if you bend the twig: of a man, if you mould the child. It has become a proverb, "*Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined.*" And that bend will be seen when it has attained its full stature and then it will defy the power of man to change it.

You sometimes hear the question put—"How can Roman Catholics possibly believe all the absurdities that their creed contains?" "How can intelligent men assent to those miserable legends and old wives' fables?" One reason is that they begin early, and train their children in the dogmas of their faith. They understand the influence and enduring nature of youthful impressions, and apply this principle to their advantage. Rome wisely brings her influence to bear upon the young, and is most solicitous to secure the teaching of her own children that she may train them in the rites and practices of her faith; and in this respect she sets the whole Christian world a noble example of zeal and earnestness which may well shame many self-satisfied, lazy, indifferent Protestants slumbering in the thick folds of their orthodoxy.

The true subjects of the Church's training are children. If she is to do her work and fulfil her great mission she must begin early, and pour religious light and influence into the young mind and around the opening affections of the heart, and she will learn the truth of the saying, "*The Child is father of the Man.*" In the great majority of cases, as the child is, so shall the man be: the temperament and character of the one are carried forward into the other. And far more likely now than at any future period will im-

pressions be made, and principles imparted, that will determine the life. As the soft, moistened clay by the water's edge, which takes and retains any foot-mark from every passer by ; so is the soft, impressible nature of our children to every outward influence that meets them. Now is the time to work, before the habits of vice have been formed, and evil rooted in the heart. In childhood you can far more easily engage the affections, and lead them by pure motives, than when their hearts have become hardened and bronzed in guilt. There is no creature so much at the mercy of another as a child with his parents. There is nothing so much under their power as their own children. During the first years of life the parents are in the place of God to them. There is no one so wise, so good, or so great as father and mother to the children who love them, and they will go to them for the explanation of all mysteries, the solving of all questions, the allaying of all fears, and the assuaging of all their sorrows. Parents, betray not your trust. You can either train up children in the way they should go, or poison the fountain of their early life from which a bitter stream will ever flow.

THERE MUST BE BOTH TEACHING AND
TRAINING.

True Christian nurture always involves these two elements—viz., *teaching* and *training*. It is highly desirable not only to have a right object in view, but also correct methods by which the end may be gained. Erroneous principles are adopted on this point, if we may judge from the common practices in the bringing up of the young. Teachers in our schools regard their work as consisting wholly in the mere imparting of information, giving their pupils a knowledge of the subjects of study—grammar, arithmetic, history, English, etc., etc. And the teachers in our Sabbath-schools, and parents in their homes, follow the same plan, and are content with teaching bare Bible facts, or the mere repetitions of verses, hymns, or the questions of the Catechism. They labour wholly in the region of the intellect, and, in consequence, their work often becomes mechanical, with no sympathy or religious impulse in it. But if a teacher is to accomplish anything, his work must be living work, with heart and soul in it, and all his labours must be inspired by love. Let no one put his hand to this work without being prepared to offer the strongest emotions and richest services of both mind and heart. Parents and teachers of the young must not regard their work as merely intellectual and appealing to

the understanding alone, through the bare facts of doctrine or technical lesson. The aim of every instructor must be to mould the heart as well as to enlighten the mind. His work is pre-eminently moral and spiritual work, and it must be kept in mind that the young have *souls* capable of knowing God, and a mere increase of knowledge without the moulding of the life is not sufficient to fill up all that is meant by Christian nurture.

Too limited a meaning is given to the expression—*religious education*. With many the prominent idea is *teaching*, and we would not say a word to detract from its value; but mere teaching is not enough. There must be *training*, and these two functions are quite distinct. Education usually calls up in our mind a vision of books and lessons, of masters and study. And no doubt knowledge is an important part of education, and that man does good service who either points out the knowledge that is most valuable, or determines the best methods of securing it. So, also, in religious education the imparting of Gospel truth is fundamental. But even Gospel truth is only a means to an end, to secure the culture of the heart in righteousness.

To *teach* is to communicate knowledge: to *train* is to establish habits of mind and heart, till these become a part of the life—easy, natural, and necessary. The



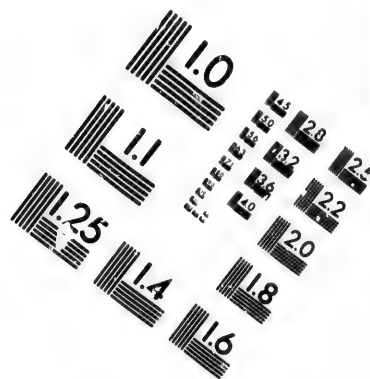
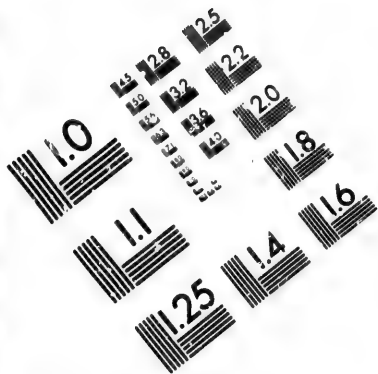
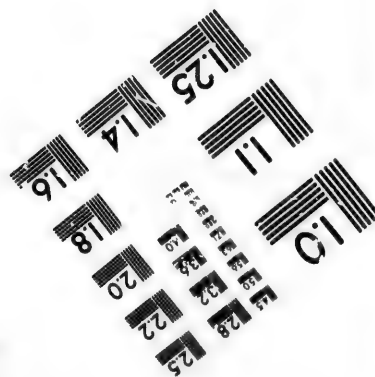
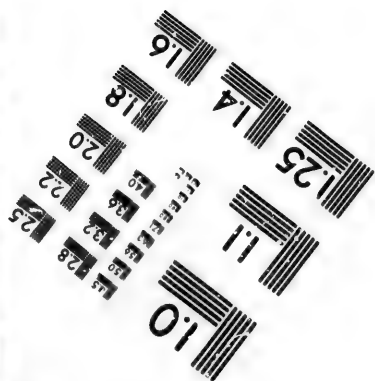
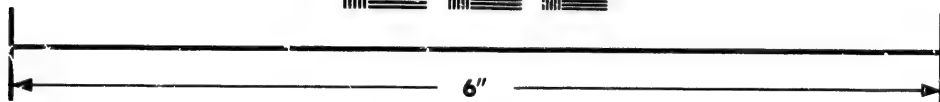
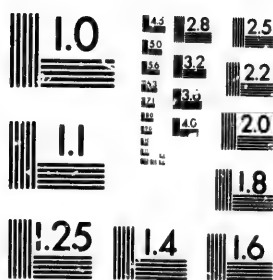


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essence of teaching is making another to *know*, but the essence of training is leading another to *do*: teaching fills the *mind*, and training shapes the *character*: teaching brings a child into new spheres of information, and training shapes his habits of life. These two must go hand in hand in the bringing up of the children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And as a matter of fact the training has begun long before the teaching. To teach a child duty is to show him what is right; to train him up in duty is to lead him to do what is right; constraining to the right side, not by outward authority, but by establishing moral tastes and habits in the soul. In the opening years of childhood we do not so much inculcate doctrines as seek to make the young know right from wrong, and lead them to hate evil and love what is good. We do not speak to them of conversion—the new heart, the need of faith in the atonement. But we tell them of Christ and his love for little children; that he took the little children in his arms and blessed them, because they were so dear to him. Above all, you set an embodiment of the Gospel before them in your own life. Mere children cannot understand the technicalities of doctrine, or of adult Christian experience, but they can understand you when you tell them that God loves them, and that the Saviour came to take care of them and keep them as His own.

They can be trained to feel and to know the difference between a right and a wrong act.

From parents and teachers far more is demanded than mere teaching—the imparting of knowledge. Our work must be viewed rather on the moral and spiritual side. As the minds of the young expand, and the affections of their hearts begin to open out, it must be our aim to surround them with all gracious influences, and to drop into the fresh soil the seeds of truth, to take root and grow, and result in a rich harvest of precious fruit. But we cannot train our children unless they see the goodness and sweetness of our life, the trust and obedience of our heart, and the life of faith lived before them. In short, the Gospel must be embodied before them in concrete form, and then through methods that are often silent as the spheres of heaven, through ways that are imperceptible, yet all-powerful, the young may be led to a knowledge of God's love and grow up in His grace.

We must be earnest, simple, and sincere ourselves, and then our life will be an element of grace, and surround them with the warm, genial atmosphere of love, which will be to them as the sunshine to the opening buds of spring. It is just here, where so many of us fail. We profess enough, even to the borders of ostentation. We bustle, and command, and punish, and make noise enough. Our lives are

decided and richly coloured, but, like autumn leaves, they have no fragrance. We make everything harsh and technical, with no sweet, balmy influences to woo their hearts, and lead the young to the Saviour. We may be orthodox in our creed, sincere in our profession, strong in our faith, and earnest in our purpose, and yet lack those particular features and elements of character which are captivating to the young. The people thronged Jesus, because there was a spell about him that drew them, and many of them were won over by the force of its beauty. A harsh, severe, cold manner chills; and through the false medium of our lives the young get gloomy, distorted views of religion, and are repelled. A life like his, and filled with the Spirit of the Gospel, is the great agency. For a child can understand a *life* when it cannot comprehend a *doctrine*.

THE END IN VIEW.

The aim of all Christian education is so clearly stated in the Word of God, that we often wonder why so many have mistaken notions in regard to it. Children are to be trained up in "*the way they should go*." Not in the way they *wish* to go: not in the way that many, alas! *do* go: but in the way they *should* go, and in which, if parents were more faithful, the great majority *would* go. Paul's language on this

subject is very explicit. He says: "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The great aim of all religious training, never to be lost sight of for one day, or during a single lesson, is to wake up in the hearts of the young a sense of the Saviour's claim upon them, and lead them to him, that from their infancy he may guide their feet in the way of peace. In all our instruction, whether in the home or in the Sabbath-school, we must never look at any lower mark, or set before us any lower motive, so that our teaching and training may gather around this central purpose.

There is a false impression on this subject that has worked much evil in the Church, and, if not speedily corrected, will work much more. The notion is generally entertained that the object of family training, or of Sabbath-school instruction, is merely to impart so much knowledge of the Bible, to explain abstract points of doctrine, leaving it to have an after effect. We do not expect present fruit, for the spiritual life of the young is something future. We have sown the seed, but must wait for a future day for results, for their conversion cannot be till they have reached the years of maturity, or at least advanced so far as to enable God to give them a new heart.

This belief forms the public policy of certain Churches, who have revival times, when men and

women are converted and join the church, and begin a Christian life. And none but converted adults ever join ; all the children and young are of the devil—unconverted and unsaved ! In these Churches the young can be taught, only for future conversion. And will any one explain how it is that so few conversions ever happen under the *ordinary services*, but generally at *protracted meetings* ? But while this is the avowed policy and practical working of certain Churches, yet the latent feeling of many who ought to know better is, that their children must grow up in sin and be subjects of future conversion. But where is the ground for this theory ? Or from what Scripture authority is it derived ? Why class those who have grown up in our Christian homes as heathen ? Or why expect no other return from our Sabbath-schools than from the masses of unbelief ? Is Christian nurture nothing different from that which is not Christian ? Can children not be brought up in the nurture of the Lord, and did Paul enjoin an impossible thing when he commanded it ? And when Scripture says, "Train up a child in the way he should go," necessity is laid upon us to train him up in sin, which is surely the way in which he should not go ? The Churches must change front ; and get on Scriptural ground, and believe—and act on the belief—that children can

grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bushnell, in his admirable little book on "*Christian Nurture*," says: "The aim, effort, and expectation should be, not as is commonly assumed, that the child is to grow up in sin, to be converted after he comes to a mature age; but that he is to open on the world as one that is spiritually renewed, not remembering the time when he went through a technical experience, but seeming rather to have loved what is good from his earliest years. There is no absurdity in supposing that children are to grow up in Christ. On the other hand, if there is no absurdity there is a very clear moral incongruity in setting up a contrary supposition to be the aim of a system of Christian education. There could not be a worse or more baleful implication given to a child than that he is to reject God and all holy principles till he has come to a mature age. What authority have you from Scripture to tell your child, or by any sign to show him, that you do not expect him truly to love and obey God till after he has spent whole years in hatred and wrong. Children have been so trained as never to remember the time when they began to be religious. The Moravian brethren give as ripe and graceful an exhibition of piety as any body of Christians living on earth, and it is the radical dis-

inction of their system that it rests its power on Christian education. They make their churches schools of holy nurture to childhood, and expect their children to grow up there as plants in the house of the Lord. Accordingly, it is affirmed that not one in ten of the members of that Church recollects any time when he began to be religious. Don't teach your children they are unconverted. Many put their children on the precise footing of heathens, and take it for granted that they are to be converted in the same manner. But they ought not to be in the same condition as heathens. Brought up in their society, under their example, baptized into their faith and upon the ground of it, and bosomed in their prayers, there ought to be seeds of gracious character already planted in them ; so that no conversion is necessary, but only the development of a new life already begun. Why should parents cast away their privilege and count their children still as aliens from God's mercies " ?

THE POSSIBILITY OF EARLY DISCIPLESHIP.

We read in the Bible, " Believe and be baptized." And as baptism is our reception into the Church, and as infants cannot believe, they should not be baptized, and therefore there is no place for the n in the Church. Such is the doleful conclusion drawn from this cruel

logic. But it is also said, "Believe and be saved." And since the want of faith excludes children from baptism, it must exclude them from salvation, by the same logic. For there is a far closer connection between faith and salvation than between a profession of faith and baptism. The explanation is that neither in the one case nor in the other are children referred to, but only those to whom the Gospel was preached, and who were in a position to believe and profess it.

Strange as it may seem, there are those who, while giving children their proper place in the world, in society, in school, in the home, and even in the love of their hearts, give them no place in the Church of Christ. The parents live within, and the children remain without. The Church folds the sheep, but turns her back on the lambs, and leaves them in the wilderness. The Good Shepherd shuts the father and mother in, and the little children out, and forbids them to come in, though that same Shepherd has said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven : suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not." Some still persist in forbidding them, and shut out the multitudes whom He has given a place among His people, as He did Timothy, from the day of his birth. Many people think Christ can be a Saviour of grown up people only, and children and youth are aliens from His divine mercy ! Before I could believe this,

Heaven and hell must change places. Bushnell again says: "Christ is a Saviour bound by no such narrow and meagre theories—a Saviour for infants and children and youth, as truly as for adult age; gathering them all into His fold together, there to be kept and nourished together, by gifts appropriate to their years, even as He has shown us so convincingly, by passing through all ages and stages of life Himself, and giving us, in that manner, to see that He partakes the wants and joins Himself to the fallen state of each. Having been a child Himself, who can imagine, even for a moment, that He has no place in His fold for the fit reception of childhood"? A Methodist minister once, in language more forcible than elegant, said, "There are only two places in all the Universe where there are no children—*Hell* and the *Baptist Church*."

But I am well aware that many are better than their creed, and that their practical treatment of children goes far to do away with the evils of their abstract principles. Others, again, do not know the full import of what they profess to believe, and go on training their children for Christ, bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, though their creed, logically interpreted, classes them as aliens and outcasts. I saw this illustrated some years ago very conclusively. I had visited a Sabbath school which

was known to be very efficient. I found a fine class of pupils—bright, intelligent, obedient, well taught and trained ; I was much pleased and said so, and spoke of them, and to them, as the children of the Church—the lambs of the flock. Afterwards I was a guest in that minister's house. He had four fine children, who were a joy to their parents. They, too, were bright, intelligent, and well trained : it was, in short, a home of love and peace, and of the fear of the Lord.

When with the father alone I remarked, "What delightful children ; what a great pity they are all the children of the devil, and that even your own dear lambs are amongst them"! He looked at me in amazement, and with something of horror in his face. "Why are you so startled," I asked. "Does not your Church demand from all her young who join her to tell *when* and *how* they were converted, and they all do so. Does not every candidate for your ministry tell when he was converted. What were they before they were converted if they use the word in any Scriptural sense? And these little children have not yet had this experience, and, as unconverted, they must be all children of wrath : and is that the feeling you have toward your own children"? "Well," he replied, "I never thought of that ; it does seem contrary to one's natural feeling." "And what is more,"

I answered, "it is contrary to the most explicit teaching of Scripture." We then sat down and talked over many of the points I have discussed in this volume. The result was that this minister almost immediately changed his view on the whole relation of children to the Church, and in a short time he changed his Church relations. He is now in heaven and finds many children there, as he had before found out that they ought to be in the Church here.

We lose much by not expecting enough, while in another sense we expect too much. If our children are disciples, we think they must be as we are ourselves; we will not concede to them the child-life, germinal, weak, fitful, up or down, according to the feeling of the hour. And yet the grand, radical idea around which all our efforts should gather, our prayers and expectations rest, is this—that the young who are trained up in the School of Christ are to grow up Christians, and never know themselves as having been anything else. The Holy Spirit can work when and where he pleases, and can set up his kingdom in the heart of a child where the faculties are opening out to apprehensions of right and wrong, as well as where the heart has been steeped for years in sin. We must not teach the young that they have to grow up aliens first and then be consciously converted, and pass through a technical experience of conviction, repent-

ance, and conversion to God. The great majority of all who are His dear children have, like Samuel, the Baptist, and Timothy, been consecrated to the Lord from their infancy. And to teach the necessity of these experiences in every case would bring the cloud of gloom and despondency over what is now radiant in the light of a spiritual sunshine.

The Holy Spirit often claims the heart as the seat of his grace from the dawn of life, and causes the light of his presence to shine forth more and more unto the perfect day. This is not only in harmony with the teaching of Scripture, but should be expected as the result of their privileges as the children of believing parents, and as the direct fruits of the place that has been given them in the Church of God. Like the opening buds of spring which are bathed by the dews and light of heaven, why not expect that the mind and heart of our children should also open into the love and grace of God, and grow up as tender plants in His garden, to shed a fuller fragrance from the fruits of their faith as they expand into maturer life.

The smallest child in the Sabbath school is a fit subject of the Spirit's presence and renewing grace. Yea, the infant in its mother's arms may be claimed and sealed by him, and this should be our confident hope, which will become the chief motive power in all

Christian nurture. Don't count them out till they learn to count themselves out. But show them their place, make them feel Christ's claims, point out their duty, and what is expected of them ; wake up in their conscience a sense of their responsibility, and that now, in maturer life, as the result of all they have been taught to believe, they must take the vows upon themselves which have been taken on their behalf. We must show them that nothing stands between them and their full enjoyment as members of the Church of Christ, save what they themselves are imposing, and that they are only adding sin to sin by refusing to comply with what their past privileges involve and the claims of Christ have always indicated. Why may not the Holy Spirit claim the whole life, from birth to death, as well as any part of it? And what He can do, we have abundant evidence that He usually does in the case of those who have enjoyed an early Christian nurture. Therefore, in the majority of these cases it is theologically false to say that unless a youth has had experiences of deep conviction of sin, has been appalled by the terrors of the law, and has had a conscious experience of conversion, he cannot be a Christian. And in the case of many who imagine they have had this experience, it is only the blossoming out into actuality of latent germs, like the leaven, which was hidden for a time in the meal. Much important growth is below the surface.

THE PERMANENCE OF THIS WORK.

"*Sic transit gloria mundi*," is written on the escutcheon of this world's fame, its honour, wealth, rank, and influence. How evanescent are the things that prove attractive to the carnal eye! How short-lived and unsatisfactory is much for which we live and toil! Man's pathway on the earth is marked at every step with many abortive efforts, and much that he does is in the sand—the next change will wipe it out. But when we work for the Lord, our labour is never in vain; and nowhere does it yield richer or more permanent results than when we labour in the hearts and affections of the young.

God's Word tells us that if children are trained up in the way they should go, when they are old they will not depart from it. The promise is explicit, and is a definite assurance as to the future of our children. Care and early training in childhood secures their stability in manhood. The meaning of this promise has not been taken advantage of, and, in consequence, parents are robbed of much of their comfort. According to this promise, we are not merely to pray for, but confidently to expect that our children will grow up baptized by the Holy Ghost, as well as baptized with water, having not only an intellectual knowledge of the Gospel, but also enjoying the grace of the Gospel: growing up as believers and knowing only the experi-

ence of those who have grown up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and who can say, "O Lord, Thou hast been my trust from my youth up."

How necessary and vital is early Christian training! And in the great majority of cases it is the germ out of which the future religious life expands. And when, in humble dependence on the Holy Spirit, the seed is sown in infant hearts, it usually takes root where the home is earnest and warm with the love of Christ. And if the fruit does not appear immediately, how often it is seen to appear after many days! There are many sad exceptions, no doubt, but it is equally true that an explanation could be given of most of these. The noblest structures of Christian manhood have had their foundations laid in infancy and childhood. Those trees of righteousness which flourish with such beauty and strength have their roots far back. And much that is seen on the surface to-day has been preparing and growing from early impressions in the home, where we have the holiest altars, the wisest and best teachers, the tenderest love, the sweetest graces, and the most lasting influences.

When Christ was giving instruction to Peter concerning the future welfare of His Church, the *lambs* were as much in His heart as the *sheep*, for together they formed that flock which He loves to lead through the green pastures. "Feed my *lambs*" is just as binding on the

under-shepherds as "Feed my sheep." So we must tend and feed them for the Shepherd's sake, as well as for their own.

How much depends on early religious impressions ! We believe that none ever get wholly beyond their reach. They have held many a tempest-tossed bark, and brought it through the storm safely into the harbour. And when the young are brought to the Saviour early, a multitude of sins are covered, and the young shun those sad years of estrangement from God, which must ever remain as a dreary waste in their life.

The importance of early Christian training may be seen in the case of Timothy, whose father was a Greek and probably an unbeliever, but whose mother lived in the hope and joy of the Gospel. She made the training of her son a subject of prayerful, constant care, and taught her boy to know the Scriptures from his youth. And when he grew up to manhood, and was himself put in charge of the Gospel as a minister, Paul enjoins him to remember what he had been taught ; to fall back on the rich memories of his boyhood, and never to forget what he had learned at his mother's knee, but continue in the godly way she had set him. "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." (2 Tim. iii : 14.)

There must have been a wonderful sweetness and power in these home-memories for young Timothy, and a great strengthening for his future work ; since he had known in his childhood those Scriptures, which now, in the prime and force of his manhood, he went forth to proclaim, leading men to the Saviour whom he had learned to love so early, that they might have a like precious faith with himself. And we are confident that, in loving remembrance of that home and all he had learned in it, he would be most anxious that the children and the young of his charge should be trained as he had been, and taught the same great truths that had brought gladness to his own soul.

“And just so it will ever be true of the ripest and tallest of God’s saints who were trained by His truth in their childhood, that, however deep in their intelligence or high in spiritual attainments they have grown to be, the motherly and fatherly word is working in them still, and is, in fact, the core of all spiritual understanding in their character”—*Christian Nurture*.

Nor need we complain that it takes long to perfect some virtues, and that training the young is slow work : if slow, it is precious, and the results are worth waiting for. Provided the fruits are good, do not complain of the time. We look out into the garden in the spring-time, and see crocuses, May-flowers, dew-

drops coming quickly to perfection. The apple, pear, or peach trees take longer to mature. Other trees require centuries to come to perfection. So, also, those graces and virtues in the life of man that are most durable and precious ripen slowly, and cost us much. But they are all of permanent value,—not a leaf shall wither. He who plants a flower on a sand-bank does a good work ; but he who causes truth and righteousness and the fear of the Lord to spring up in the heart is a co-worker with God, and is causing the moral wastes to blossom as the rose.

And what has simply budded here shall bloom and brighten eternally in the Garden of God, where no frosts nip the tender buds. See that blooming shrub, how it grows beneath the sun's quickening light ! How wonderfully everything is freshened beneath his warm and tempered rays ! So the growth of the soul in all knowledge and virtue comes from the quickening of that Sun of Righteousness. When His warm beam penetrates the heart, then sunshine and summer have come into the soul. The growth of that soul may be slow, but its fruits are the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

THE CLAIMS AND EXPECTATIONS OF
THE CHURCH.

Train up a child in the way he should go ; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.—Prov. xxii., 6.

For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.—Acts ii., 39.

When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice ; and I am persuaded that in thee also.—2 Tim. i., 5.

I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth. . . . I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.—2 John i., 5 ; 3 John i., 4.

O God thou hast taught me from my youth.—Psalms lxxi., 17.

THE CLAIMS AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE CHURCH.

In a former article we showed that the parent represents the child—a principle that obtains both in civil and religious affairs. When a parent lays hold of the Covenant he lays hold of it for his child also, and that child is held bound by his parent's act, and the Church regards him as so included till, by an after life of sin, he shows that he refuses to make the parent's act his own, and is resolved to separate himself. By faith Noah prepared an ark for *the saving of his house*, and, from his day to our own, he stands forth as a proof that a righteous parent obtains a blessing from the Lord, not only for himself but for his children also. The New Testament says, "By faith he saved his house." But this is just what the Old Testament history has recorded of him, "I have seen *thee* righteous before me, come thou and *all thy house* into the ark." Even Ham, who, so far as personal character was concerned, manifestly deserved to perish with the ungodly world, was saved from the

flood for his father's sake, and by his father's faith. This law runs through the whole Bible—"If ye have judged me to be faithful, come into my *house*." No truth is more clearly taught in the Bible than this: that God blesses one for the sake of another. He blessed the Egyptian for Joseph's sake; He remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of Sodom; He healed the daughter for the mother's sake, the son, at the request of a pleading father, and the servant, because of the faith of his master, when neither daughter, nor son, nor servant was aware of what was being done for them. God would have saved the doomed city for the sake of ten righteous men, and He blesses us all for His Son's sake. Neither with respect to this life, nor the life to come, does God deal with us as isolated individuals. Therefore, when God and the people entered into covenant; (Deut. xxix, 9-13) the adults entered into covenant for themselves, parents for their children, and masters for their servants. So in the Sinai covenant parents represented their children, and acted for them, when God promised to be a God unto them, and they promised to be His people, to have no other God than Jehovah, to keep holy His Sabbaths, to do no murder, etc. In this solemn transaction parents acted for their children, as they again were to act for theirs from generation to generation.

THE BAPTISM OF CHILDREN.

In virtue of this organic life, this filial relation, we baptize children on the faith of the parent, and baptized children feel (when they have grown up) that they have been dedicated to God, and this alone has been a gracious check on many a young life. The thought that their parents had given them up to God, and in loving trust committed them to the care of the Good Shepherd, made a serious impression on them, and held them in many an hour of danger.

As a general thing, baptism for the children of the Church--the lambs of the flock--is desired, and even earnestly sought for by the heads of families. Nevertheless, many instances of carelessness and criminal neglect are constantly seen, where the children of professing parents are allowed to grow up without baptism, and are treated as if they were of the world, and not of the Church. Such neglect is a great wrong, committed against all the parties represented in the ordinance, viz., the *child*, the *parents*, the *Church* and the *Saviour* himself. It is a robbery of the birthright belonging to the young, and steps should be taken as soon as possible to remedy the evil. We are losing in spiritual power and efficiency, all the time, because many of our people are not taught the nature and practical uses of the baptism of children, and the grand truths and principles to which the ordinance

points. They fail to realize the holy binding which it lays upon them, bringing the home and all its members under law to Christ. That most precious and expressive ordinance which Christ appointed ought to be one of the most effective instruments for promoting Christian life, and keeping the young in the fold where the Good Shepherd has put them. And yet sufficient advantage is not taken of it by parents, and their gross neglect becomes the occasion for complaint against the ordinance itself, especially when the baptized are treated as aliens. We are persuaded that some comply, simply because it is a custom, or an expressive rite, and not because they see the full advantage of it. With others it is merely giving a name to the child. Such would not be ready with an answer to any one who asked the question, *Cui bono?*

BAPTIZED CHILDREN, MEMBERS OF THE
CHURCH.

Baptists place their children outside of the Church, and count them as aliens from God's people, till, on a personal profession of faith, they are admitted. The theory leaves the rising generation outside of Christian life, and this treatment of children differs from all the dispensations of God, and runs counter to His arrangements, which is proof sufficient that it is not

of God. When in baptism the attention is fixed on the infant alone, without looking to anything further, we may be inclined to ask—"What use is there in it? What can an infant know, or do, in the matter?" But a moment's reflection will show this to be a very limited and partial view of the ordinance. Without discussing now the *uses* of infant baptism, we may remark that one grand design is, to fix the attention on the rising generation, and turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, making their godly upbringing an imperative duty, and putting the true type of their moral and religious growth before the Church, viz., that children are to grow up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Baptized infants are made and recognized as disciples in the school of Christ, with a view to their future instruction. The command was to disciple all nations, and this discipling applies to infants as well as to adults. For the word does not imply *previous* learning, nor even *present* learning, but *learning in design*. Not those who have finished, not those alone who are in course of instruction, but even those who may not yet have begun, if placed there for the purpose, may be fitly termed disciples. It is their future training that is the chief concern, therefore the visible Church has charge of those children and is bound to watch over them and feel a responsibility for their godly upbringing. Not

the parents alone, but the Church also—pastor, elder, member—have all a solemn duty in teaching them the fear of the Lord.

Circumcision laid a holy binding on the circumcised to conform to the will of God. They became debtors to do the whole law and must conform to its requirements; and as children were circumcised as well as adults, it lay as a solemn obligation on parents to teach their children the meaning of the rite, the truths to which it pointed, and the standing given by it as the circumcision of God. In short, it fixed attention on the rising race, and made their moral and spiritual welfare the chief concern of parents; and this is precisely the case with baptism now. When we take Scriptural views of baptism, and know the care that is to be taken of the young as the lambs of Christ's flock, all unworthy views of the ordinance vanish, and we see the place given to infant instruction and training to be worthy of the wisdom and love of God.

It cannot be too earnestly shown that baptized children are disciples of Christ, introduced into His school with a view to learning the lessons of His grace, as all children are in the State with a view to their full citizenship. And he who grows up and fails to make God his friend, is false to his position as a child of the covenant. Baptism leads us on to holy

ground, and puts the lambs within the sacred enclosure, and guards them against sinful encroachment. Infant baptism establishes a tender and sacred relationship, and gives the baptized a title to their inheritance, and puts the key of our Father's house into their hands. And if they sell their birthright, fearful must be their guilt. Let parents never cease to press these things upon their children, and to exhort them as children of the Church to make their calling and election sure. What a powerful influence it ought to have on the mind of the child, the constant feeling that his parents have dedicated him to the Lord through baptism, and enrolled him as a disciple ; that he is in consequence to be constantly watched over by the Church, and that he is dear to the Chief Shepherd as a lamb of His flock ! We can make the fact of their dedication the plea with them before God, not to forsake the God of their fathers ; we can plead *with* and *for* them the promise of the Covenant that God will give our children the blessing signified. We are permitted to plead with a Covenant-keeping God, and to expect that as households worship together on earth in the Church below, so households will meet around the throne on high and rejoice together, ascribing eternal praise to our Father who is not slack concerning His promises. And what a gracious influence all this must have on the minds of Christian parents, the

sense of their responsibility as lying under vows of the Lord concerning their children, knowing that their chief concern is the moulding of their life, and that the charge to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is a most solemn one.

A PRACTICAL MEASURE.

We would earnestly recommend the general practice observed by some congregations, of having all the baptized children and young people assembled in the body of the Church in the presence of the elders and parents, and addressed on the duties and privileges that belong to them as the children of the Covenant, on the sin and danger of apostatizing, and the need of taking their place and assuming the character and responsibilities that belong to them as members. This might be done at a special service, or, better still, at the ordinary diet for public worship. It is said, on reliable authority, that the vast majority of the children thus dealt with grow up pious members, who take their place as naturally in the Church as they do in the world. We cannot doubt it, for this is the Lord's own plan, which He will not fail to bless. Much is said about the best way of securing the conversion of our children, and this is a most excellent way; for this plan, if faithfully carried out, will render their conversion unnecessary, and, by bringing them

up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, will prevent them from growing up in a life of sin. And this would lead our people and the whole Church to regard the baptism of children as a great spiritual reality, and not a mere formal rite.

THE CHURCH'S HOPES REALIZED.

In this matter we do not act as sovereigns, but as ministers of God's mercy. We can neither give the child a new heart, nor predict with certainty its future career. The children of pious parents often grow up godless; but the reason of this can generally be seen in defective training, and in many inconsistencies between the parents' theory and practice. We fully endorse the words of Richard Baxter on this point, who says, "Nineteen out of every twenty of our children, consecrated to God in their infancy, will grow up dutiful, orderly, and serious, and before they have reached mature age will recognize their membership by a personal act with sincerity and to edification, if the Divine plan with respect to this matter were fully carried out."

The great change in the case of the young will develop itself gradually, and concurrently with their daily life. They will grow into their Divine life as they grow into their manhood; from being babes in Christ, into the full stature of men. It is wonderful

with what unanimity the leading men of the Church of God attribute their Christian character to early training. From such men as Augustine, Bishop Hall, Thomas Scott, Doddridge, Baxter, Cecil, and, in short, all through the cloud of witnesses, we meet the same uniform testimony, "We are more than half what our mothers made us." (*Vinet.*)

How interesting, yet how solemn the position of those who have been dedicated to the Lord in baptism, and who grow up in the Church in the full enjoyment of all her privileges, but who have never complied with her obligations, and stand apart as aliens would do! To these young people themselves we would now say with all earnest affection: "You do not avoid your responsibilities by simply refusing your recognition of them. We have to tell you that you are living in disobedience knowingly: you are proving false to the place given you, and which you now hold as children of the Church: you are refusing to pay your vows to the Lord which He claims from you: and you are consequently in danger of incurring His sore displeasure."

The baptism of these little children commits them to the Lord's side, and though they may live to deny Him, they can never escape those holy bonds that have encircled them from infancy. To their latest day, though they may have grown up in sin, we still

regard them as prisoners of hope, and must continue to tell them that the vows of the Lord are upon them, and that all gracious influences have been thrown around them, and now combine to keep them in the fold, or bring back the erring when they have wandered away. So that even with regard to those who renounce their birthright, who leave their Father's house to live in riot and sin, "O Church, if wise, must still bear with them, and exercise a wise oversight. She will find room for the exercise of a large, Christian common sense, following them with her prayers, as parents do their wayward children. Hope may have to look into the future through tears; for a father waits long before he shuts the door against his prodigal child, and always leaves a place in his heart for the prodigal's return, and, when he meets him, kisses away the tears of penitence from his cheeks.

VARIED EXPERIENCES OF THE CHRISTIAN.

Infant discipleship and growth in grace ought to correct the false philosophy of many in regard to a uniform experience in the Divine life which is insisted on. Additions are made to the Church by adult conversions from the world. We rejoice in this, and hope they may be multiplied a thousand fold. But what the Church should most naturally expect is *progressive sanctification*, growth in grace from infancy,

and development from within. Paul was brought into the kingdom in one way ; Nicodemus in another ; and Timothy in yet another. Lydia was *converted* to the Christian faith, but her children were brought up in it, and each had an experience according to the circumstances. But because one man grows up in sin, and is converted late in life, with accompaniments of law-work peculiar to itself ; it is wrong to teach that all must grow up in sin, children of the devil, to be converted late in life in order to be saved. That because there has been a crisis in the spiritual history of one man, there must be a similar crisis in the case of all God's people ; that because one can tell when he was converted, all must be able to tell ; that because it was men and women who were converted and added to the Church on the day of Pentecost, this is the only way in which the Church can grow by additions from without ; and that, as faith was required in those cases in order to baptism, there can be no baptism without faith ; that because Lydia was converted, her children must be converted, etc.—all this is false reasoning and very misleading, because it applies that which is true only in certain instances, and special occasions, to all cases indiscriminately. The growing of the divine life in the heart of a child, and its feeble apprehensions of duty, cannot be the same as in the case of an adult ; and yet all must admit there is

such a thing as the informing of Christian character in the heart of a child. The experience of the jailer who had never heard of a Saviour till that memorable night from Paul's lips, and that of his children who would grow up in a Christian home, must have been very different. And this is a very partial view of Christian experience that does not allow for the varying testimony of Paul, who had been a fierce persecutor, compared with that of Timothy, who never was anything else than a child of God. Nothing short of criminal blindness would seek to compress these into one mould. In the growth of an infant to manhood, each day makes very little difference in stature and wisdom, and yet it is by these slight additions that manhood is reached, and the imperfect years of childhood left behind. So grace, in the hearts of infants, like this gradual growth in bodily stature, though quiet and imperceptible, may not be the less real, nay, is rather in harmony with all growth. It is often insisted on, that all who are Christ's must be able to tell the *time* and *place*, the *when* and the *how* of a work of grace in the heart. A premium is put on this testimony, while the inability to do this is made by some an evidence of an unconverted state. But, we believe that, in the great majority of cases, our spiritual experience cannot be so mapped out. And the pressing for it in this form distresses and misleads

many earnest souls, and overlooks wholly the very truth on which we are insisting. Many children of God have been greatly troubled because their experience does not correspond to the descriptions of conversion which they hear spoken of. But why should the testimony of Paul to his conversion disturb the peace of Timothy, who never needed to be converted, who knew the Scriptures from a little child, and was a child of grace all his days? Let every growth spring from its own root, and develop in its own way, and then all life will be beautiful.

How many have had their peace broken, and their fears excited, because when hearing others tell of their convictions, struggles, terrors, their spiritual throes, and then peace and joy, they imagine something must be lacking in themselves! "Oh, see how it is with others, how definitely they can tell of the Lord's work of grace in their souls! Oh, that we could be thus definite, and tell the day of our conversion, and the method of the Spirit's work in our heart! But we could never discover our first act of trust in the Saviour, or the first dawn of hope, or the first influence of love!" But this neither surprises nor alarms us. What if the Spirit meant you to have your own experience, and not another's, as He meant you to have your own life and work! What if it should be the same in grace as in nature, for who can remember his birth

into this world? My son loves me, but I would not like if he could tell when he began to love me. My babe, even, is mine, though it cannot speak my name! We may wrong both ourselves and our Saviour; we may disparage the grace of God, and grieve the Spirit by doubting our interest in Christ, because we cannot tell the things the Spirit never meant us to know. If the genuine fruits of the Spirit begin to appear in our life, we need not be distressed if we cannot tell when they began to grow, or when bud or blossom appeared. The most important growth is under the soil. Paul could tell the day of his conversion to the Christian faith, for he had grown up in a hard, cruel, Jewish home till the day God called him by his grace, and, moreover, it had around it the machinery of the supernatural. But Timothy could not tell, for he grew up in the nurture of the Lord in a Christian home, under the best of all instructors—a mother who trained him for the Lord from infancy. Paul referred to Timothy's advantages, which were superior to his own, and emphasized the blessedness of knowing the Scriptures from childhood. Paul grew up for future conversion; but under a Christian mother's care, Timothy grew up a child of grace, like John the Baptist, who was consecrated to the Lord from his mother's womb, and was never anything else than a lamb of the flock. And to demand from Timothy the same experience, and

the same confession, would keep him out of the Church forever. Some are brought into the kingdom through convictions long and severe, when Sinai thunders, loud and alarming. These could as readily forget their existence as the time of their birth-throes. But with others, and especially those whose early Christian nurture has been most earnestly attended to in the home, grace will be infused into the soul from day to day, gently and imperceptibly ; the hidden leaven gradually leavening the whole lump. In their case there is no sudden crisis, as there need be none. On many a heart the Spirit distils His influence as silently as the dew falls on the tender grass, and light breaks over the soul as it does over the world, more and more unto the perfect day. And the Church will make a great mistake if she seeks to wring out the same testimony in all cases, and she must guard against lifting particulars into universals, taking what is obviously exceptional, and making it the normal condition. The circumstances attending Paul's conversion were most obviously exceptional. But to Samuel, John the Baptist, Timothy, and the vast majority who are being brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, 'the kingdom of God cometh not with observation, but the spiritual life is developed concurrently with the natural, as was the life of the Holy Child Jesus.

THE REAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE YOUNG.

Often when pressing the claims of the Saviour upon the young, and seeking to lead them to the Lord's Table, they have replied : " We admit all you say, but it is such a responsibility to join the Church ; or, if I were a Church member, I could not do as Mr. So-and-so does." But not having joined the Church, and not being members, the young imagine they are freed from all responsibility, and that until such time as they come and profess faith in Christ, the Church has no claim upon them. But what if it be replied, " You were *born* members, and this membership has been recognized in baptism ; you have, in consequence, enjoyed all the privileges of the Church's influence and teachings, and the fact that you now refuse to accept pardon from a merciful God, and salvation at the hands of your Saviour, does not lessen your responsibility, for all are under law to Christ, and those who are not His children are rebels. When you were made members the Saviour did not require your consent, just as the State did not ask your consent when you were made a subject. In both cases you were born into your place and privileges. And the question you have now got to answer is not, " Whether you are the Lord's by self-dedication, and subject to the laws of His house," but, " Will you break those holy bonds asunder ? Will you renounce

your obligations and, by abjuring your allegiance, become a rebel? Will you prove false to the position and privileges your Christian baptism gave you? Have you freely and gladly, with mind and heart, accepted that place then given you, and voluntarily assumed the character of a disciple?" You say, "It is a very responsible thing to *join the Church!*" But is it more responsible to venture forward, leaning on His promised grace, than to feel that by neglect and sinful postponement you are in danger of grieving the Spirit and drawing back to perdition?

THE POWER OF EARLY TRAINING.

How often does our early training lay hold of our later life and keep us back from sin, and bring us into conscious covenant relations! "Train up a child," etc. is often here fulfilled. "There is a wonderful tendency on dying beds to take on afresh the experiences of childhood. What an encouragement to pious mothers! Infantile emotions, I am sure, often return in the last days of life, and a mother's advice rings in the ears of the prodigal son. This gives her greater hope in talking with those who, however wicked, have been trained for God in their infancy." The man who was by common consent regarded as the highest living exponent and representative of Calvinism, has said that probably the great majority of real Christians

are regenerated in their infancy, so that their after conversion is only the blossoming out into manifestation of a life received from heaven at the beginning of their career. So the position we are arguing for is not a novelty in the Church.

The young, growing up, have a strong claim for the exercise of a wise, loving, Christian charity, and a tender, sympathetic restraining hand, and the Church must see that in the flock of Christ the lambs are well cared for. Let all who have them in charge dwell long and fondly on these blessed themes, and they must never forget that the children are to be recognized and treated as members of the visible Church of Christ. In much love, and with a patience that never fails, show them that they cannot without great guilt break the connection given them; that the Saviour expects them as the objects of all this care to act worthily. He hedges them round on every side; He throws around them gracious and helpful influences, so that if they break away from all restraint they will have to break through the barriers which His grace threw around them, and go forth into wickedness with greater guilt, as those who knew their Master's will but have not done it. The Jew had his position given him as a member of the commonwealth of Israel, that he might learn to keep the law of God and receive the circumcision of the heart, as well as

that which was in the flesh. So have the young to-day their places given them in the Church of God. It will be fatal if the young misunderstand this ; let them be wise in time, and as the children whom the Lord hath blessed, they must learn to love and serve Him with a true heart, and with a willing mind, and make their right of *property* in the covenant a right of *possession* through faith.

THOSE OF WHOM WE STAND IN DOUBT.

What shall be done with those who grow up in the Church, and in mature life not only stand aloof, but trample the law of Christ under their feet, and ignore all the claims which His Church and people lay upon them? We must admit the sad fact that thousands who have been baptized, and who should be in the Church, are to-day serving the devil ; living a life of sin, in open violation of every vow ! We now ask, What shall be done with all such? Shall we cut them off summarily? Shall we at once proceed to arraign, condemn and punish them, and brand them with the mark of Cain? So some would counsel us to do, and such would seem to be the logical consequence of our theory. Or, shall we, on the other hand, allow them to remain undisturbed and unrebuked, as if all were right, and nothing else expected from them? Surely fidelity to our Master would for-

bid this also! What then are we to do in all such cases of seeming apostacy? At this point let me ask a question of parents. What do you do in your own homes with a wayward son or daughter who is rebellious under your authority, or, it may be, has thrown off parental restraint? Do you shut your door against them at once, and drive them from your heart? Do you not rather leave a place for repentance, and let your door remain open for their return? Do you not wait in faith and patience, and even continue to plead with them, with the tear in your eye, and a yearning fondness in your heart? Hope dies hard in a parent's heart; for even when children have gone far astray, you follow them with your prayers and do not give them up as lost. How long a father will wait! And a mother far longer, with more of hope in her yearning heart! And Jesus longest of all! His patience and love are wonderful, and many whom we thought lost are held by Him, and led to retrace their steps.

See that mother in her Highland home as she kneels at evening prayer. Draw near and listen to her words, as her tears fall thick and fast through her fingers on the floor, "Lord, have mercy on that poor lassie, wherever she may be this night. Let her not die in her sins but bring her back to me again, that I may bring her back to Thee." Then she rises from

her knees, and goes out to look through the darkness, as if to see if the erring one be near. She comes in, shuts the door but leaves it unbarred, saying to herself, "I will not bolt it, lest she should come when I am asleep, and I would not like her to find my door locked against her. She might think I did not want to have her in the home again, but God knows how I yearn and pray for it." What wealth of love in that poor mother's heart! But His love is still more wonderful. A mother's love can be understood, but the love of Christ passeth knowledge. What bonds so strong and enduring as those cords of His love with which He waits to bind us to Himself!

In the same way must the Church deal with her erring children. She, too, must leave a place for repentance and wait long with the door open. For the Saviour often shows us that He has not lost hold of many, whom we have long since consigned to perdition. She follows the erring with her prayers, and pleads that the Good Shepherd may seek and find those sheep that are wandering on the dark mountains of sin, and bring them back into the fold. Let Christian people take a deeper interest in the young, and a more hopeful view of their spiritual state. And when they go astray tell them of the wrong wisely; remind them in the spirit of kindness; entreat them lovingly as Christ would do; care for them, and plead

with them as if they were your own flesh and blood ; and never mistake the authority of technicality and law for the influence of love and faith. Love suffereth long and is kind. Love thinketh no evil ; beareth all things ; believeth all things ; hopeth all things ; endureth all things. Love never faileth.

Let these graces still abide in the Church, faith, hope, love ; these three. But the greatest of these is LOVE.

VARIETY OF CHRISTIAN LIFE AND
EXPERIENCE.

Now there are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit.—1 Cor. xii., 4.

And there are differences of administrations but the same Lord.—
1 Cor. xii., 5.

And there are diversities of operations but it is the same God who
worketh all in all.—1 Cor. xii., 6.

But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to
every man severally as he will.—1 Cor. xii., 11.

For the body is not one member but many.—1 Cor. xii., 14.

Feed my *lambs*—ἀρνία μου.

Feed my *sheep*—προβάτα μου.

Feed my *sheeplings*—πρόβατα μου.

—John xxi., 15-17.

Whose heart the Lord opened.—Acts xvi., 14.

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour
Jesus Christ.—2 Peter iii., 18.

VARIETY OF CHRISTIAN LIFE AND EXPERIENCE IN THE CHURCH.

We have already briefly referred to this point, but the subject is of sufficient importance to demand further consideration. False ideals of Christian life and character sought to be realized in the experience of many earnest people have injured them. Artificial methods of living, and arbitrary tests of the Spirit's presence, are most hurtful. Seeking to reproduce the experience of some one else in their life has caused many to enter the Kingdom of Heaven halt and maimed, who might have entered as strong men in all the symmetrical proportions of grace. In consequence, our Christian character is often lopsided, like a tree with a branch sticking out only in one direction: one side pushed out into undue prominence. One man makes his religion consist in negations: a Christian must not dance, must not play cards, must not go to parties, etc. Another man is wild on the question of temperance: a man who takes a glass of spirituous liquor cannot be a Christian.

False ideals of experience and life, dreamy notions of what is called the higher Christian life, erroneous views of holiness, artificial methods of Church discipline, cause many to remain spiritual dwarfs all their days, instead of becoming rounded out on all sides—full, rich, symmetrical,—growing up into the full stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. Many are permanently injured by the very earnestness with which they translate into practice a false conception of what they regard as the uniform experience of a believer's life. It is easy to simulate an experience, and persuade men that they have it; and then men will come into the Church on a false basis, and build up an artificial character. Let every man have his own experience, and that will be according to his nature, organization, and past history.

NO UNIFORM CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

What a wonderful variety obtains in the world of nature ! There are no two objects exact copies of each other, of all that has been created ; no two trees, or flowers, or blades of grass that grow alike ; not two faces among all the generations of men, that may not be known from each other by marks of difference ! With what profusion God's bountiful hand hath scattered its beauties over the face of the world, and with what rich variety His fingers have painted its

pictures ! Monotony is everywhere broken up, and the universe is filled with the manifoldness that characterizes the great Creator. And, as in nature, so in grace we find the same rich variety. No two creations of the Divine Spirit are exactly the same.

Some people insist on a uniform Christian experience on the part of all God's children. And many earnest souls are greatly troubled because their conscious experiences of life, and of the Divine dealings towards them are very unlike the experiences and dealings of some others of whom they hear, that are looked upon as models and are supposed to live very near to God. The attempt is often made to put all into one mould, to produce one type, to wring out one testimony from every life ; and in this way much misconception is produced and many unnecessary alarms are caused in the minds of earnest people.

One man speaks of passing through long days of mental conflict ; of having deep convictions of sin ; great fear of the Divine wrath. For weeks and months he felt as one hanging over the very brink of perdition. And then at last light dawned, the load was removed, and he obtained peace in believing. And this man, ever after, looks back to this experience of his as a necessary step in the Divine life, and even doubts the reality of a man's Christian character if he cannot point back to the same experience.

One man has struggled long and sorely, and even now hardly dares to call himself a Christian. Like the prodigal he feels unworthy to be called a son, and pleads to be made only as one of the hired servants; while another has been awakened into the sense of the Divine consciousness, as a little child awakes from its slumbers in its mother's arms—calm, peaceful, trustful. Some come into the kingdom through storm and darkness, while others awake to find themselves lying on the Divine bosom. Cæsar Malan, the celebrated Genevan divine, says, he was awakened into the Divine love, as a mother awakes her child by a sweet kiss on its cheek. And because there is such a difference between the experiences of these men, the one doubts the reality of the other's faith. But no two men have had the same religious experience. Our Christian life is as personal and diversified as our external history has been. The dealings of God with one man may be as different from his dealings with another as the differences in the features of men's faces. Though it is the same Spirit, there are diversities of gifts, and he divides to every man severally as he wills. Now if we teach people the necessity of such and such experiences as a necessary condition of entering the kingdom, of passing through certain phases of feeling, it will either cause them fear, or they will begin to imagine they have had those

experiences, and passed through those feelings. And in this way, there is great danger of producing an artificial type of life. For much that goes by the name of religious feeling is produced under false ideals, and is unnatural.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHRISTIAN LIFE.

The type of Christian life in any one age will depend largely on the surroundings and characteristics of that age. The type of life in the Highlands of Scotland a hundred years ago, when "THE MEN" were seers of visions and dreamers of dreams, and stood on the very borders of the invisible world, and imagined they had special glimpses of its secrets, is very unlike the type of Christian life found in our churches to-day. Yet these were all men of God, who lived near to the Saviour in their day, while those who differ from them are as truly men of God, who live just as near. It is simply a different mould in which they were cast. The Puritan character—stalwart and unbending—differs much from that of representative men in our time, and yet there is no degeneracy. Those men were full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and so are the men now—each for his own time and work. Some of the things we regard as lawful in the wise use of our Christian liberty our God-fearing forefathers would have been scandalized at ; and in say-

ing this we do not exalt them, nor yet reflect on ourselves. The times were simply different, and so were the men ; and this variety will continue through all the ages of faith ; but underneath it all, men may be found equally loyal in their hearts, devout, reverent, and all swayed alike by the claims of the Redeemer. It is neither a praise nor a disparagement of them, nor of us, to say, that we condemn some of the current practices of our fathers, while they opposed customs and practices which we have adopted.

We meet with a very different type of life in the quiet country side, in the little *meeting-houses*, amid the open spaces of heaven, from that found in the great centres of life, throbbing with emotion and tinged with a thousand influences. And yet people equally dear to the Saviour may live in both places. The one may wonder at the narrow, contracted, and what might well be characterized as the mean ways of the other. Or the latter may be horrified at the extravagant, gay, and seemingly worldly conduct of the former, and yet both may be under the same guiding hand ; for the Lord's sympathies do not always run in the channels of our prejudices.

But coming from the *outward* to the *inner* life of the believer ; from what is incidental and temporary to what is vital and permanent, we meet with the same variety in the lives and hearts of men, for there

are differences of administration under the same Lord ; *e.g.*, Paul's conversion had elements in it very different from those that characterized the conversion of Nicodemus, or that of James, Peter, or John, who simply left their boats and came to Jesus, and yet they were all led by the same spirit of promise. While each of these again differed from Timothy, who *grew up* in the truth from infancy, and never knew what separation from his Lord meant. And all these differed from Newton, or Col. Gardiner, who had lived loose, licentious lives, till the Divine Spirit laid His hand on their hearts and changed them for God.

But because one man grows up in a life of sin, and is converted later in life, it is wrong to teach that all men must grow up in sin, children of wrath, to be converted as Newton was ; that because there has been a great crisis in the spiritual history of one man, therefore there must be a similar crisis in the history of all God's people ; that because it was men and women who were converted and added to the Church, that this is the only way they ever should be received ; that because faith is required before baptism in the case of an adult, there can be no baptism without faith in the person baptized ; or because one man thinks he can tell the time of his conversion, all believers must be able to do the same. All this is false reasoning and very misleading, because it applies

what is true only in certain instances, and on special occasions, to all cases indiscriminately. It overlooks the teaching of Scripture and the facts of Christian experience.

The growing of the Divine life in the heart of a child, the feeble apprehensions of duty, the gradual maturing of the Christian character of the young cannot be the same as in the case of an adult. And yet all believe there is such a thing as early Christian nurture, and the informing of Christian character in the heart of a child, and that the *lambs*, as well as the sheep, belong to the Good Shepherd. In the growth of an infant to manhood, each day makes very little difference in stature and wisdom. Yet it is by these very additions that manhood is reached, and the imperfect years of childhood left behind. So grace, like this gradual growth in bodily stature, though quiet, and imperceptible, and slow, is not the less real, or progressive, or ripe in the final results.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S VARIED WORKING.

But it is said "It is the same grace that is applied, and the same Spirit that works in all hearts; and His presence and manifestations must be the same wherever He works." It is affirmed that the fruits of the Spirit must be uniform wherever they grow. But we believe that both Scripture and Christian experi-

ence point to an opposite conclusion ; for not only has the same body many members, but the same Spirit has different ministrations and diversities of gifts to suit all these members.

Is it not the same sun that shines over all our world to-day, but how endlessly varied is his work ! Yet all is beautiful, and we rejoice in the endless variety of it. With as much reason might it be said that because it is the same sun, his work must be everywhere the same ! But is it ? Why, there are not two objects alike, which that sun creates on all the face of the globe ! Some are trees, some shrubs, and some flowers. Some are high and others low, while yet others creep on the ground ; all shapes, all colours ; a wonderful diversity, from the little moss at your foot to the great cedars of Lebanon ! No two objects are exact copies of each other in that wonderful prodigality, and profuse variety, and yet all are perfect after their kind. Why then may we not expect the same variety in the spiritual world as we actually see in the natural ? We know that the same God works in grace who works in nature, and why may He not manifest the same variety in His works ? According to a man's past life, his organization and temperament, his knowledge, and the place he is to occupy, and the work he may be called upon to do, will be that man's experience under the Spirit's dealings ; in

some cases quick, pungent, vivid ; in others quiet, slow, but sure as the opening blossom. The spiritual crisis of one man may be accompanied with storms, thunder, earthquake, and eclipse. While that of another will be the quiet, almost unfelt dawning of the day of peace ; grace being informed, and working silently as leaven leavening the lump.

When the claims of the Redeemer are pressed upon the conscience, one man may decide with such resolution and vigour as will mark a definite act in his life ; his heart yields like the breaking open of a seal. While the decision of another may be as quiet and peaceful as the meeting of two summer clouds, which blend their fleecy fulness together, with no jarring or noise. If the grace of God lay hold of a profligate, or of a man who has consciously spurned his duty, he will be more apt to have deep convictions, and even stings of conscience, more especially if any great outward trial be laid upon him. But a moral man who has been surrounded, and his character moulded, by religious influences from boyhood ; who has hovered on the borders of decision for many a day, may have a very different experience. Even when he is entering fully on the Christian life, it may be to him more like making up his mind to pursue a certain course ; the formation of a mental judgment, and the following of it up ; a sense of duty, more or less strong, laid

upon his conscience ; and a resolve to perform his vows hitherto neglected. Any of these things may mark his spiritual history.

The day of conversion may be distinctive and clearly relieved against the background of the past life ; and some point back to an experience which they regard as the great crisis when they passed from death unto life. Oftener, however, it is the quickening and growth of a principle developed concurrently with our daily life. The sunshine and the shower have come alternately, and, as the result, the fields are green and rich, but who can remember all the showers that have produced this beauty ? So our spiritual life to-day is the result of all that has gone before us ; of all the influences, good and bad, that have touched and shaped us into our present selves. How does the day dawn ? Is it suddenly, as by a flash of lightning ? No, the first faint streaks appear no man can tell how or when ; but they broaden and deepen more and more unto the perfect day. So does the light of God's love break over many a heart when the Spirit shines into it. How does the summer come, suddenly as from one impulse ? No, it comes gradually through many days, that sometimes threaten to throw us back into winter again. In the same way summer comes in the soul, and life buds and blossoms under the beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF CHILDREN.

What we have said above applies specially to the case of children, and is the common experience of those who grow up amid the ordinances and privileges of God's house ; they are not converted, but grow up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. These children may be, and often are, subjects of the Spirit's presence from infancy ; and how could they tell the day of conversion, for they have never known what alienation from God means ? "Do you remember when you hated God ?" asked an examining deacon of a young candidate for admission to the Lord's table. "No, I always loved God," was the timid reply. And the good deacon had some doubts as to the orthodoxy of the answer, for he imagined, because he could remember such a time in his own case, when he hated God, that there must be such a time in the case of everyone.

Let no one believe that this teaching undervalues the Holy Spirit's work. We grant the need of His presence and power in the case of all, both old and young. The need of a spiritual birth is universal. But let us not forget the varieties of form under which this change may be wrought. Who dares affirm that the Spirit and the soul can come together in only one way, or produce but one experience in all ? Must every case be one of self-conscious conversion

involving a struggle with sin, more or less protracted? A long period of *law work*, under conscious displeasure followed by peace and joy? Cannot a child be *brought up in grace*? Must a child be dealt with in the same way as an adult? Is there no grace, and dealing, and life proper to a child? Do we say a great spiritual change is needed by all, but infants are not capable of that change? If this be so, then the good Lord is more cruel to little children than He is to any other creature in His Universe. Who dares affirm that a child cannot belong to Christ till he is older? Or do we pray that God may convert them when they are older, but do not expect Him to take them now? Our view on this point will determine our whole spiritual attitude toward them.

When Bunyan starts his pilgrim from the city of destruction to the celestial city, he makes him carry his heavy burden for a long time till he comes in sight of the cross; he falls into the slough of despond; he loses his way; comes near the burning mountains; he has to fight for his life, time and again. In short, his whole progress is a series of encounters with determined enemies, and he finds the way most hazardous. But when his wife starts along the same road she has very few of these rough experiences, and her children have none at all. True, he tells us, they cried a little, but that was because they had not

started with their father. Bunyan, though a Baptist, believed that it was possible for children to start on the way to heaven with their father, and that they might all start as a family together; while the children would have their own experiences, which would be different from those of their parents. And in all this the dreamer has conformed to the teaching of scripture, and is true to Christian experience as this is interpreted by daily life.

THERE SHOULD BE ROOM FOR VARIETY.

We must not imagine that children coming home must see and hear exactly the same things; provided they all *come home* we need not be too anxious about the experiences of the way. One man tells how the Spirit laid hold of him, and how he lay for weeks in distress of mind, and how at length light dawned. He could as soon forget himself as forget the time of that striving! While another knows that he has had no such experience, and if it be essential he must still be in his sins! One has come in amid storm and darkness, and the other grew in quiet peacefulness, as the dawning of the summer morning. Yet both of these men may be leaning with equal trust on the same Saviour, and growing up into the same fulness.

Some men come into the Kingdom, as the breaking

up of an ice-bound river in spring-time : there is a freshet ; confusion and considerable danger ; while others glide in quietly, as the summer cloud that forms in the sky. " Some have been allowed to stumble in head first, with all manner of crudities, yet they have come in, and we thank God for it. But others come into the Christian life with as little friction, as little ado, as little conspicuity, and yet with as much certainty as a cloud forms in the pure mountain air. . . . Don't disturb them. If they love Christ, if their hearts gush out in praise ; if they betake themselves to the ways of Christian life, its dispensations, its bounty, its magnanimity, its generosity, its truth, its self-government, its ardent passion of life, its self-denial in love,—if they betake themselves to these things, never put them back by asking, ' In what way did you come ? Were your experiences orthodox ? ' "

Beecher.

Wherever a flower grows it is the proof of its own beauty : and wherever the fruits of the Spirit are seen, it is the all-sufficient evidence of His presence and power in the heart.

CULTIVATE INDIVIDUALITY.

If the Christian life is natural there must be individuality. Each child of God must be himself, and can be no other man, let him do as he may. All true

fruit must grow on its own root and stem, and in its own way. Every stream must have its own channel, and flow from its own fountain. We injure ourselves and blight our life, by trying to copy some one whom we admire, and who has become a model to us. We feel bound to walk in his steps, with his pace, and clothe ourselves in his garments, whether they be suitable or not. We get false ideals of what we should *be* and *do*. And in this way all true, natural growth is stunted by being cast in an artificial mould. Copy no man; but the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect pattern, and by His grace strive to be yourself, and let every man develop the tendencies and features that belong to him, and are the natural outcome of his own life. "There was never anything that so nearly killed me," says Beecher, "as trying to be Jonathan Edwards. I did try hard to mould my character and experience upon his. I then tried to be Brainerd, I then tried to be James Brainerd Taylor, then I tried to be Payson, then I tried to be Henry Martyn, and then I gave it up, and succeeded in being nothing but myself."

But why should men try to translate themselves into something else. The same sun that shines round and round this great globe, and pours its light and glory over the cedars of Lebanon and on the sloping sides of the Alps and the Andes, shines also on the

little moss, and modest, shrinking flower, and gives its distinctive shape and colouring to each thing that grows. And so the love of God that broods over men, and beautifies the Church of the Redeemer, clothes her in variegated garments. The same Sun of Righteousness sheds his beams on high and low; and the Divine Spirit that fills them with His fulness imparts to each believer, and gives him his own distinctive character. Each thing that the Sun creates has its own individuality; and so each soul into which the Holy Spirit breathes His quickening grace has its own distinctive life. Dale, in his lectures on preaching, expresses this very beautifully. "The city of God has twelve gates: every one of them is a gate of pearl. What presumption it is to insist that unless men enter by a particular gate he cannot enter at all! Let them enter by the gate that is nearest to them. Nor should we insist that to reach the gate itself there is only one road. Some men find their way to it by the path of *duty*; some through ravines of gloomy desolation and despair; some across pleasant meadows bright with the sunshine of hope, and musical with the song of birds. When once they are among the happy nations of the saved, inside the jasper walls, no one will challenge their right to a place in the holy city, because they entered by the wrong gate or approached the right gate by the wrong road."

Don't let us linger too long on the *way* or *method* of our coming to Christ. Have we come, and do we now trust Him as our Divine Saviour? If we do hear and obey the Shepherd's voice, we need not be afraid because our experiences do not correspond to the experience of some one else, whom the Master is training for other service and in other ways. For the Shepherd not only calls each of His sheep by name, but he leads them forth, each by a different way, and still they all meet at last in the same fold.

THIS VARIETY IS PRESUPPOSED IN ALL TRUE
CHRISTIAN TEACHING.

As there is no uniform experience, we must not imagine a man wrong because he has not travelled our way, and seen things in our light. Both our pulpits and Sabbath-schools, in order to hold the intelligence and moral worth of many of our people, must enlarge their conception of what Christian life and experience are, and concede the fact that they are not cast in one mould. False ideas of Christian character sought to be realized in the experience of many earnest people have greatly injured them. Artificial tests and laws of life have been most hurtful. Seeking to reproduce the experience of some one else in their own sphere has caused many to enter the

kingdom of heaven halt and maimed, who might have entered as strong men to run a race.

By an attempt to secure uniformity, Christian character, as we have already observed, has often been left lopsided, like a tree with one tremendous branch sticking out, only in one direction ; one side stunted, while the other is pushed out in undue prominence. In this way many remain spiritual dwarfs, instead of being rounded out on all sides—full, rich, symmetrical—growing up into the full stature of perfect men in Christ. Many are permanently injured by the very earnestness with which they try to translate into practice a false ideal of what they call the higher Christian life. Erroneous views of holiness and artificial methods of Christian discipline have blighted them.

The problem for the pulpit to solve is the separation between what is accidental, and what is essential, in the life of a child of God. A sanctified common sense must be evoked that takes a wider and a wiser view of God's dealings with men, and sees that while all life is sacred and nothing common or unclean when done by the direction of Our Master, we can serve God in the field, the shop, the factory, the office, as well as in the pulpit, and that sometimes parents are the best preachers of righteousness and the most effective interpreters of the love of God.

And as Jesus suited himself to all, and administered to each as he was able to bear it, so all who have learned of Him must do the same. He took the little children into His arms, and blessed them as His own; he spake to the people with a tear in His eye; He rebuked or encouraged; welcomed or sent away; again He taught multitudes while His heart overflowed with love, and His emotions mastered Him. And all who have learned of Him, must do as He did, and, as far as possible, make their ministrations timely, taking into account the wonderful diversities of the Holy Spirit's work. And, as it has ever been on the earth—each believer must sing his own song, in his own way, and look back upon a history peculiarly his own, so will it continue to be in heaven, all individuality preserved, for even there one star differeth from another star in glory.

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FAMILY LIFE.

The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge.—Jer. xxxi., 29.

Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, etc.—Ex. xx., 5-6.

And it shall come to pass, when your children will say to you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.—Ex. xii., 26-27.

FAMILY LIFE.

God's dealings have always been with the *family* rather than with individuals. There is no better proof of this than the *Passover*, and the terms of its institution. It was the most expressive of all the Old Testament sacrifices, and its aim was to deliver the *House*—"A lamb for a house." "Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said unto them, Draw out and take a lamb according to your families and kill the passover. . . . And it shall come to pass when your children will say to you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the *houses* of the children of Israel in Egypt when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses."—Ex. xii., 21-26. The *houses* were saved by the believing act of the head in sprinkling the door-posts with blood according to the commandment of the Lord, *i.e.*, the faith of the head took the blood of the slain lamb and sprinkled the door-posts, and the destroying angel passed over those houses, and even the unconscious babe was saved by the father's faith.

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The passover is a great symbolic picture of the Gospel, for God works ever in the same way and through the same instrumentality. Christ is now our passover, and the Saviour of our home—the lamb is still for the house—and the believing head must sprinkle its blood on the door-posts of his home ; and *now*, as surely as *then*, the Angel of Death will pass over it, and, as in the case of the Philippian jailor, this act will not only save himself, but also his house.

HEREDITY IN THE SPHERE OF FAITH.

Who can doubt the law of heredity that is pressing to the front just now for consideration in the scientific world—the principle by which the good or evil in us becomes the heritage of our children? Physical constitution, disposition, innate tendencies, the mental and moral type of the sire become those of the son. This seems to be a comparatively new truth in science, and she is making much ado about the discovery of it. But it is an old truth in theology, which we have been preaching since preaching began, and it has met many a sneer from the *savants* of science. But now they have changed front, and declare that the preacher has been speaking the truth when he said that “God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children”; that a tendency to scrofula or consumption in the one,

will likely show itself as a tendency in the other, and that natural laws are God's decrees. We do not need the testimony of science to confirm this article of our faith, which is asserted on Divine authority. We simply tell a class of philosophers that there are other lessons they might learn with advantage from the same inspired authority, if they would only take time to think this possible.

But this law of heredity is not confined to man's physical or moral nature. Who doubts that there is such a law of organic connection between parents and children in the spiritual realm? And that the law of the Spirit of life is such that the faith of the former will be propagated in the latter? And when under religious training this does occur, it is no surprise to us, but just what God's word has taught us to expect, that for many years the life and character of the parents will flow into those of the child. This representative principle has even a wider application in the public characters of Adam and Christ, owing to which the sin of the first Adam has come upon the whole human family; and the obedience of Christ—the second Adam—is sufficient to save all who do not reject Him. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Both sin and grace reign by one.

ALL HEIRS TOGETHER OF THE SAME PROMISE.

The aim of all Christian nurture is to claim the Home for Christ, and the first question is, How do you regard your children? Do you think of them as being of the devil, and unsaved? Or, as the children of the Church, who are being trained into their holy profession? Do you class them with the ungodly, and strangers to the covenants of promise, or as being heirs of the same promise with yourselves? Do you live with your children, and for them, as if some day they may possibly be converted; or are they the lambs of the flock already, with the seal of faith upon them? In short, are they Christ's or the devil's? The settlement of this point will determine our relations to them, as well as our treatment, and our expectations of them.

We know how Abraham looked upon the members of his family, for the Bible tells us. Whatever spiritual promise was given to him he regarded it as belonging to his children as well; and so he lived with his sons Isaac and Jacob, *as heirs with him of the same promise*. Not the father alone, but the family were included in the family covenant. So God not only permits, but commands this still in the New Testament economy, where parents and children live together in the home as heirs of the same promise.

The education of their children, and their training

in the faith of Israel, was binding on every parent, and the home became the centre of religious teaching and worship. The parent is a priest in his own home, and the concrete form of the Gospel to the child, and a living epistle to be read daily; and all this comes as an influence, an atmosphere, and an inspiration, rather than as a dogma of technical instruction. A child can be trained in any way, and to any creed; and proper training determines its future, and shapes the child's feelings, words, character, his life and destiny. With the Divine blessing on his labours, a parent can make his child do, and be, what he ought to be and do; and every parent is false to his mission and work who overlooks and neglects this. It is a sad thing to give our children the heritage of Cain and drive them out from the presence of the Lord, and number them among aliens and outcasts, till they learn to believe us, and act according to the character we have given them, and run the dark and downward road for which we have prepared them.

Judah said to his father, "Send the lad with me, I will be surety for him." So Christian parents are the sureties before God for their children, to train them for God. In baptism the parent says, "Send the child with me I will be surety for him. If I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame forever." The thought of many

a Christian mother as she looks upon her first-born child has been interpreted by Hannah. Looking from her child to the Lord who was above and over all, she said in the devoutness of her heart, "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I have asked of Him." Among all the assurances that cheer and strengthen us, there are no hopes brighter, or sweeter, than the full persuasion that the same blessed bonds encircle the *home*; that parents and children, even while sojourning and dwelling in tents, are heirs by promise of that better country, and children of our Father's House—in short, heirs together of the same promise. We bring the lambs as a part of the flock, and put all under the Shepherd's loving care, believing He will fulfil His promise. And our prayers to Him breathe the spirit of loving trust, and of longing desire. "O when wilt thou come unto me, I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." And surely there is no truth that shines forth more clearly from Scripture than this, that God desires to be known and enjoyed as the God of the families of Israel. This is His own distinct promise, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people."—Jer. xxxi. 1.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY.

But the character of the young is not irrespective of the care, nor independent of the character of the parents themselves, who must be careful to be themselves all that they desire their children to be, for they learn by example rather than by precept. Of John the Baptist it is said, "For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb." But this character was not to come to John by magic, for cause and effect were linked together here as they always are. Who were the parents of this child? And what was their character? They were both righteous before God, and the child of such parents was just what might have been expected; growing up in such a home and surrounded by such an atmosphere. In nature, like begets like. But the God of nature is also the God of grace that works by the same law—the faith that was in thy grandmother, and in thy mother, and now in thee also. There is an heredity of faith and grace, as there is of consumption and scrofula. Great faith does great things, and it is everything to have come of a godly stock, and to be the seed of the righteous. The wise King has said, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Prov. xxii., 6.

Scripture is explicit as to what that way is, "The way of the Lord, the way of His steps, the way of peace, walking in His ways, the way of holiness, the way of life, the new and living way along which all the redeemed have walked." It is nothing short of training them up in Christ, for He is the way to the Father. But then it is asked, Does this promise hold true? We have so many failures as to cast doubt on the future. But when failures occur let us look for an explanation in our faulty methods, and not in the Divine promise.

The home, as much as the State, requires proper authority and rule ; without this all will become anarchy and confusion. God saw that Abraham would command his household and his children after him. *Family government* is much talked about, little understood, and yet how necessary ! A home will soon be destroyed, unless there is constant, careful discipline, strong, decided rule. But family government is not all in the rod ; much less is it mere arbitrary authority, or the reign of brute force. Many a harsh, cruel father storms about his house, threatens and thrashes, and makes his home a bear garden, and calls this family government. They are as cruel to their children as the heathen, and mistake this for the nurture and admonition of the Lord, which is always gentle, tender, loving. There must be wise authority,

for it is a false liberty that would do as the elder Mills did with his child—omit all religious training lest the mind of the lad should be biased in any particular way. But to leave the mind and heart without culture is to prepare the soil for weeds, and every noxious growth. Father and mother are more than advisers, they are clothed by God with a measure of authority to be lovingly and believingly exercised.

THE SPIRIT OF THE HOME.

Parents and children are closely knit together in the bonds of the Gospel, and the obligations are mutual. Parents are to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ; and children must honour their father and mother, and obey them in the Lord. The children must obey, and the parents must prove themselves worthy of this obedience ; and then the home will become the true nursery for those plants of our Heavenly Father's planting.

How tender and pathetic are all the scenes in Christ's life where little children appear, and it was his touching regard for them that clothed those scenes with beauty and pathos. Not only did Jesus know all that was in a father's and a mother's heart, but he sank new wells of love and tenderness in the heart of humanity ; and the eye of Christ first appreciated the true worth of childhood, and sought to fill the home

with the grace of the Gospel, that its truths might lie on the hearts of the young as the dew-drops lie on the lilies of Esdraelon, and all blight and corrupting influences be kept from their opening minds.

In the natural world everything depends on the atmosphere. Is it pure, or miasmatic and poisonous? There can be no health in a polluted air. In the neighbourhood of the coal mines of England the sheep are as black as the coal, and for miles around everything is polluted. So is it with the homes of our people. The atmosphere that fills some is pure, transparent, and healthful as the breath of mountain air; while in others it is poisoned by vanity, worldliness, greed, envy, Pharisaism and uncharitableness. In some the spirit is noble, generous, earnest, tender and pure; but in others there is something low, mean, narrow, and suspicious about them. The atmosphere here, as surely as in the natural world, will determine the kind of growth. Tell me the spirit of your home, and I will tell you the character of your children.

It is not among the outward and sensuous that the chief agencies in moulding character are to be found. Men are most influenced by silent, unseen forces, for health or poison is in the air we breathe. The spirit of the home, its moral tone and temper, and not its formal lessons, or dogmatic authority, will mould its members. It is by the atmosphere we silently breathe

that our character and conduct are determined, rather than by any technical rules and regulations. The best authority is an *influence* felt as if coming from the very presence of the Saviour Himself. In some places young life is as sure to be blighted, as a tender plant would be frost-bitten, if set out in the night air of January ; while other homes are sweet, hopeful, reverential, and loving, where the children grow in freshness of spiritual life and beauty, and Jesus looks upon such homes as the very garden of spices.

How fortunate we have been, if we have grown up in a home where there was no dulling atmosphere, no cold criticisms, no heartless fault-finding, no mean insinuations, or morose authority, but happily only a bright, cheerful, healthful influence. How happy those homes, where all needless asperities are smoothed down, the home that knows no supercilious distrust, or mutually estranged feelings, and whose members are all knit together in love. And where our chief aims are religious, why is it not more common to communicate one with another, that it may be said, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard?"



FAMILY RELIGION.

A lamb for a house.—Ex. xii., 3.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

—Joshua xxiv., 15.

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.—Deut. vi., 7.

Those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.—Deut. xxix., 29.

FAMILY RELIGION.

The *Home* is God's great nursery, where the plants of our Heavenly Father are to grow till such time as He transplants them. The family is the oldest institution, and the most fundamental. Keep the home pure, and all will be safe, but let it become corrupt, and both Church and State will totter to their fall. The home being the foundation of society, God has made the training of their children binding on the parents. "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." But in our day all this is delegated to others, and a teaching class in the Sabbath School sets the father free. He has given up the moral and spiritual culture of his family to strangers, and retains merely the business affairs of the firm, and continues to control the finance department. But in family religion the father is the priest, and is primarily responsible for the character of the home, and the Godly upbringing of the children.

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NECESSITY OF PERSONAL CONSECRATION.

The parents themselves—father and mother—must be what they would have their children to be, and exercise an influence in their home, not through bare authority, the fear of the rod, or formal precept, but rather by breathing an atmosphere from their life and example. The true formula of family training is not “Do as I tell you,” but “Do as I do.” Joshua realized this fully when he solemnly resolved to consecrate his home to the Lord ; he knew that first of all he must consecrate his own life, and so he thought of *himself* first—“*As for me.*” He knew that the father would be the model after which the children would take pattern, and that his own life lived in the home was to be the gracious influence in all home training. In too many instances the father turns all spiritual responsibility over to the mother, and everything is left to her as being most with the children ; and the responsible head will not as much as lighten the burden by sharing it. He attends to the worldly concerns, and she to the religious. But in all true home religion the father should realize his chief place as the *house-bond* (husband), and be himself the first meridian for all after measurements ; the prime mover and influence in Christian nurture. Religion, in the first instance, must be realized as a personal matter, and then as a sacred trust for others. The chief

responsibility rests with the head of the home, and the father must begin with himself, and train through the influence of his own life. He must first give himself to God, and then bring his children with him, and learn to pray as David prayed—"Thou Lord God knowest thy servant, therefore let it now please thee to bless the house of thy servant."

Without personal consecration we would despair of any true fruits, for it is only as we feel deeply ourselves, that we can ever hope to make others feel. We must ourselves be in the way along which we would seek to lead others. We must be able to say to our children "*Come*," and not "*Go*." "*Come with us and we will do thee good for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.*" We will speak to others in vain, unless they first see the fruits of faith in our own lives. And the healthiest and most powerful influence in every home is the atmosphere of love and of the fear of the Lord, which father and mother breathe around them. If our homes are to be for the Lord, and our children to grow up as plants, we must, like Joshua, say—"As for me," and then we shall next be able to pledge our home—"AND MY HOUSE, WE *will serve the Lord.*"

THE CONSECRATION OF THE HOME.

Personal religion must be followed by *family* religion. "As for me," must be followed by "*And my house.*" The one bound to, and naturally following the other; this is according to the will and arrangements of God. At this point many professed Christian parents fail. They imagine that the religion and welfare of their home depend on the will of God, exercised arbitrarily, and not through their instrumentality. Forgetting that here, as surely as anywhere else, *cause* and *effect* are linked together. The Divine order is that the head stands for, and represents his house—"me and my house": the faith of the children depending on the faith of the father, and both linked together in strong and gracious bonds. This is a principle that runs through all God's dealings, and is one of the commonplace truths of the Bible.

Joshua felt that he stood for his family as well as for himself, and he so declared it—"me and my house, *we* will serve the Lord." All were to be united in the same worship, and all engaged in the same service. The religion was to be *family religion*, and the head to be responsible for the whole. It was the same with the ark which Noah built by faith; it was for the saving of his house, and not for himself alone. The New Testament teaches that the father's faith should

his *house*, and this agrees with the Old Testament. "I have seen thee righteous before me, come thou and all thy house into the ark": "thou, and thy son, and thy son's son: thou and the children which God hath given thee: the faith that was in thy grandmother, and in thy mother, and now in thee also." Here is the law of *spiritual evolution*. The new springs from the old; hence there is progress; and the old is linked to the new; there is therefore continuity. Grace was designed to pass from sire to son, and link families and generations together, and not to be the religion of separate units.

Home-life—family religion—is much cared for and emphasized in all the dispensations of the Divine dealings. We say these earnest words to newly married people: "In setting up a home of your own, let it be your first and highest aim to bring Christ into it, and this will sweeten all its joys, and sanctify all its sorrows, far more than if you had the finest furniture, and most fashionable decorations, that ever adorned a dwelling. That home is happy where the Saviour is the chief attraction, and all the little children are growing up in His nurture, and are all under the Good Shepherd's care. Let the grace of Christ's presence be enjoyed by the *household*, and then yours will be, not a mere dwelling-place, a residence, but truly a *home*—a home for your heart's affections, and

its most sacred exercises. How Christ longed to be invited, and how he loved to come into the homes of men when he lived with us on the earth! And he has the same affection for them still, and he will come most gladly to-day when welcomed. Worship him in your *home* as well as in your heart."

FAMILY RELIGION MUST BE PRACTICAL.

Joshua affirmed that both he and his house would *serve the Lord*. Our life is a service, for his people are redeemed in order to serve him in the liberty and with all the joy of children—purged from our dead works to serve the Living God. This lesson is brought out clearly in the demand God made upon Pharaoh—"Let my people go that they may *serve me*." We desire not simply to be saved from pains and penalties, but to be enabled and led to serve God with a true heart and a willing mind; and to learn to do good to all as we have opportunity, and especially to serve the household of faith. Too many of Christ's professed followers are selfish and self-indulgent. Their chief thought is, What can we get? How can we be made happy? They are seeking their own ease, comfort, and exemptions from all ills. They think religion is something to make them feel well, and give them freedom from care, sorrow and pain. They would like their life to be made easy,

soft, smooth, and be dropped into the promised land without the necessity of marching through the wilderness. They would like to be put into a glass-case for safe preservation, or, lifted up, as in a spiritual balloon, with all toil and danger far below.

Such people forget that life is for *service*, and not for self-indulgence, and that those alone shall wear the crown who have been faithful unto death. They overlook the fact that God deserves and claims the service of a free, loving, and redeemed people: and that every true life is one that is helpful to others. Salvation is not all: "How much can we get, but also how much good can we do; and every true servant of the Lord offers himself on the altar of his faith. With too many it is not—"Lord, what would'st Thou have me to do?" But, "Lord, what am I to gain by this service? What will I get by obedience?" Their ideal is not Jesus going about doing good, but, "Lord, I deserve more at Thy hands than this man: give me more." In short, not what can I do, but what can be done for me.

Our faith embraces a salvation from sin; this, however, is only a part, and not the whole of it. Another equally necessary part is *service*—a consecrated home rejoicing in the salvation of Christ, and going forth to serve Him, as being His, and not their own. When Pharaoh yielded to the Lord's demand he said, "Go,

ye, serve the Lord, and let your little ones go with you." All the blessings of God's salvation come to a man's house, that as a family they may serve the Lord. The characteristic of heaven is that they serve him day and night in his temple. And our life on the earth should be after the same copy; for the best way of enjoying God is to work for him, and the only crown to be worn, or that is worth wearing, is given to those who are faithful unto death. And one of the best and most effective spheres for Christian usefulness is our own home, and no labour brings in speedier returns, or furnishes richer results. What a noble example Abraham furnishes to us of fidelity in the home! "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."—GEN. xviii., 19.

FAMILY RELIGION MUST BE OPEN AND CONFESSED.

We are to let our light shine before men, and not put our candle under a bushel. Christ's disciples hold his gifts as a sacred trust on behalf of others, and not for mere selfish ends. And never, as the head of a home, be ashamed of the family altar, or neglect to offer the morning and evening sacrifice. When Joshua determined for his home as he did for

himself, it was a grand public confession before assembled thousands. A crisis had arisen such as tries men's faith. Many were apostatizing, and so it was a time of solemn decision and resolve, but Joshua never hesitated to let it be known on what side he stood, or where the loyalty of his heart rested. And so he confessed not only for himself, but for the household, and pledged them all—"Me and my house ; we will serve the Lord."

Sometimes we are afraid to let it be known that we honour God in our family. We have known those who dispensed with the usual family worship, when gay visitors were being entertained as guests. They lowered their colours and for the time being deserted their Captain. In this way the atmosphere becomes chilled, and the tender plants are injured. Desertion is common, else the solemn admonition would never have been given with such earnest emphasis: "If any man is ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall I be ashamed. But whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father and His holy angels."

An eminent lawyer, on one occasion, had gone to attend court, and was staying for the night with a plain farmer, a former acquaintance. The farmer was a God-fearing man, who every evening observed family worship, but was a man of no education. And

as the time for worship drew near, he felt inclined to omit it, as he shrank from reading and praying before a man of learning, who knew so much more than himself. But the words of Christ sounded in his ears—"Whosoever shall be ashamed of me," etc. So, with much fear and trembling, he took the book and had family worship as usual. The whole scene was primitive but solemn. The lawyer reasoned in this way, "Here is a man discharging a duty that costs him much self-denial ; it was evident he shrank from the ordeal ; yet his sense of duty led him to do what he would far rather have omitted. Here is a man with whom the realities of religion are supreme. He feels as I do not feel, and enjoys what I do not enjoy." So he pondered the whole matter over—the quiet, homely, earnest, heart-felt service, all so real to the family. When the lawyer went home, he talked it all over with his wife ; they had children of their own for whom they felt anxious ; and it ended in his setting up a family altar in his own home, and resolving like Joshua, "Others may do what seemeth them good, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Many parents want to have a consecrated home, one where they can welcome and enjoy the Saviour—a home for God to dwell in with their family. This is often the separate desire of father and mother, and yet they have never conversed freely to one another

on the subject. Strange to say, they feel more under restraint to one another, than toward complete strangers; and so they have never spoken together of what they both have felt strongly—the need of family religion. Let this barrier exist no longer, and learn to talk freely to each other of what concerns you both. If hitherto ye have not honoured God in your family, and if your children are old enough, talk the whole matter over with them, and tell them that, depending on God's grace, you intend to set up a family altar, and say to them, "From this day we will serve the Lord." There is nothing that unites a home like common service, and nothing that will cause the members to love one another like the bond of a common love to Christ.

INSTRUCTION MUST BE FROM THE HEART.

Parents are commanded to teach their children; this, however, must never degenerate into a dry routine, a dull and dreary task, but something that issues from the heart, full of sympathy with the truths imparted, for it is only that which comes from the heart, that will in turn reach and influence the heart. The doctrines we are to teach our children, the love we long to have them cherish toward the Saviour, their reverence for His word, and obedience to His law—must all be in our own hearts first, and then, out



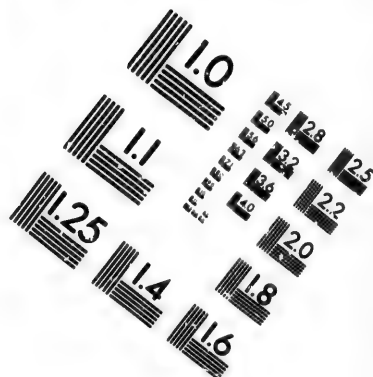
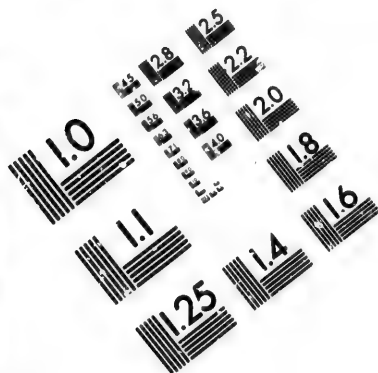
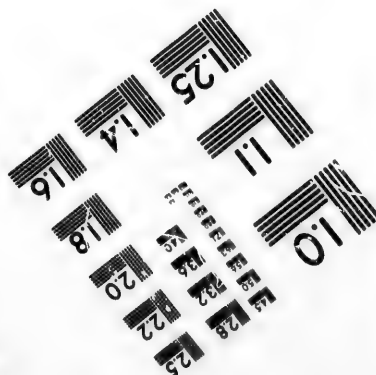
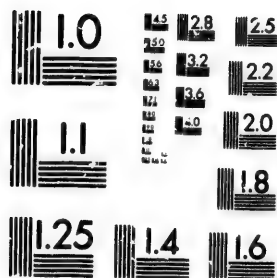


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of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak ; for we can only teach effectively what we feel and value, and not simply what we have heard, or know by rote. Heart work is easy work, and it alone is effective in moral culture. Not till our own heart is filled with love to God, and we are deeply interested in the training of our children for Him, will it become a labour of love to us, and not an ungracious task. If our message to our children be mere *hearsay* and not personal conviction, it will not go far or do much. We believe, and therefore speak, is the proper order. If we are to do any good at all, we must feel the truth we desire to impart, and therefore we are told that, as a preliminary to teaching, we must love the Lord our God with all our heart. " And these words that I command thee this day *shall be in thy heart*, and thou shalt teach them to thy children," and when the truth lives in our heart it will bud forth in theirs, and all home duties, and home life, and home religion, instead of being a weariness to us, will become an inspiration, a sanctuary to the heart, and a sweet rest to our souls. A sense of duty, a feeling of responsibility, the fear of consequences, may all be motives, but chief of all is love to the Lord Jesus Christ ; and to a heart that believes, obeys, and loves the Saviour, all work will be easy and every duty a pleasure, and the home will become the most sacred temple.

2. This work requires *diligence* as well as devotion. "Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children." Anything that enlists our affections, secures our diligence without a grudge. In the natural husbandry, the husbandman is represented as rising up early, watching, working, and waiting anxiously for the fruits of all his pains. So in the spiritual world, it is the hand of the diligent that maketh rich also. Christian parents, the trust committed to you is most sacred, betray it not! The work of training your children for Christ is great and necessitous, and must be regarded as the work of your life. Sow with a diligent hand the seeds of truth in the rich soil of their young hearts: water the seed sown with your prayers: and no labour will bring you in larger returns. In this sphere alone you should know that your labour will not be in vain. And if success in our ordinary calling demands diligence, how much more watchful and careful ought we to be in that work on which the peace of our homes, and the spiritual welfare of our children, depend! Here it holds true also. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there are those who withhold more than is meet and it tendeth to poverty." And there is no famine like the famine in a home where the Lord is not known, and where none of his gracious influences are enjoyed.

It is often said "We just live for the sake of our children ; all our plans and expectations are on their behalf." But in this we surely do not include their temporal, to the exclusion of their spiritual welfare. To preserve our home for the Lord and train our children for him, is the one great work of life that requires line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. "Thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."—Deut. vi., 7. The religious culture of our home is not to be a mere by-job in the family, taken up at uncertain intervals, and emphasized at odd hours ; but day and night, late and early, through cloud and sunshine, an atmosphere of diligence, sincerity and trust, is to pervade the home. On week days and Sabbaths, in labour and rest, the one aim, and the one great work, is to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

3. With the demands of our day-schools on our children's time, with their overloaded curriculum, and with home studies that exhaust all their energies, no opportunity is given for religious studies through the week. They are quite overtaxed as it is. And the Church, not to be behind, has multiplied meetings and services, and outside spheres of labour, so that home-life has become a thing of the past. Father and child

are seldom in the home together, and are in danger of not knowing each other when they meet on the street. "You had better remain at home to-night," said a wife to her husband, who was going out to yet another meeting, "as I would like to introduce you to our own children." "My dear," replied her husband, "I abominate all this excitement as much as any one, but I cannot help it ; this living out-of-doors seems to be in the air, and the Church herself has caught the infection."

We greatly admired the old Sabbaths—but now they are to us only a fond memory—with their morning service, where young and old met together for the worship of God ; with the quiet evenings left for home study, reading of the Scriptures, catechism ; the familiar conversations on gospel themes—soft, tender, loving words,—that made the things of grace a permanent reality to the young. Evening service, though now a necessity, is far from being an unmixed good, for it brings with it many a drawback. There is far too much preaching, and home instruction, and family life too much neglected.

Our ideal Sabbath would be public worship in the morning for young and old ; Sabbath school and Bible-class instruction in the afternoon, where, again, all ages should join ; and all the members of the family at home together in the evening. This was

the way in Scotland for many generations, and the world knows with what results. Now, they are multiplying their evening services as in other places, and their young people are fast learning to know as little about the Scriptures as they do elsewhere. "I have heard an eminent business man in our city say," says Prof. Thompson, "that if he had his life to live over again, he would most probably accumulate less wealth, but his relations to his sons would be much more intimate, and their characters very different." Nor would the boys have been the only gainers by such a parental training. The teacher would have been taught also.

This is not the only father who has lived to regret past remissness, and that things in the home would be regulated very differently, had life to be lived over again. But what Christian parent can say that he has done all that it was possible for him to do for his family? Or that he has been as solicitous for their spiritual, as he has been for their temporal welfare? Who among us all has felt, as he ought to have felt, the full import of Christ's commands—"*Feed my lambs,*"—*suffer the little children to come to me and forbid them not?* Who has responded with all loyalty of heart to the demand—"Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"?

If we had life's road to travel over again, we would

most likely change our course and seek to have fewer regrets at the end for words unspoken, work undone, and aims never truly realized. Lost opportunities rebuke us all. But the past is beyond our recall, for spilt water cannot be gathered up again. All that we can do is, that depending on Divine grace, we will resolve to be more faithful in the future and train up our children in the way they should go.

THE HOME: WOMAN'S WORK IN THE
CHURCH.

Let them show piety at home.—1 Tim. v., 4.

Hannah said I will not go up till the child be weaned, and then I will bring him that he may appear before the Lord and there abide forever So the woman abode and gave her son suck until she weaned him for this child I prayed : and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him.—1 Sam. i., 22—27.

And Naomi took the child and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.—Ruth iv., 16.

The young women to love their husbands, to love their children. . . . Keepers at home.—Titus ii., 3—6.

I will, therefore, that the young women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully.—1 Tim. v., 14.

But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.—1 Tim. ii., 12.

Let your women keep silence in the Church. . . . and if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home : for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.—1 Cor. xiv., 34, 35.

THE HOME: WOMAN'S WORK IN THE CHURCH.

Many a sweet domestic scene is portrayed in the Word of God, and brief but precious sketches are given us of many a noble woman ; while much is said of her power for both good and evil. Chief among them all, is that vivid, life-like home-scene at Bethlehem, which stands out in the simple narrative of the Gospel more clearly than the pencil of a Raphael could ever give it. It is the picture of a wonderful home-scene, in which both earth and heaven are interested, because it is the meeting-place and bond between them.

It cannot be denied that the tendency in the Church for some time has been to neglect home-life and home training, and to cultivate an outside, ostentatious piety, found largely at the street corners, to be seen of men—"Verily they have their reward." But in order to conserve the moral forces we possess, and gain others, we must return to the good old paths, and anchor the hearts of our people around the home, for this is the foundation of all moral

stability, and we touch the root of the social tree when we touch family life. And if family training is neglected, religious life will wither up by the roots. There is ground to fear that this garden of the Lord is not as carefully cultivated as it was in former years, and that tares are being sown in soil, once largely occupied by the good seed of the kingdom. Our wise and good forefathers of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland and Ireland knew the value of family training, and the great need of having the young well grounded in Bible knowledge. The long, earnest diets of catechising on Sabbath afternoon or evening are well remembered by the generation now fast passing away. And the solidity of character, their sturdy independence, their shrewd sagacity and indomitable perseverance; their integrity and fear of the Lord, that have given them a name wherever they have gone, were more largely due to their careful training in Bible knowledge than to any other cause. And, while the father was the priest of the family, it was generally the mother that diffused the atmosphere of Christian influence in the home. And it was her more constant oversight and watchfulness, her loving, careful dealing, that generally stamped the character and moulded the life of the young, and sent forth men and women fully furnished in mind and heart to do their duty by the will of God.

THE NEED OF THOROUGH BIBLICAL TEACHING.

All acknowledge this need, and are loud in its praise, and yet the practical steps are not taken to secure it. We fear that, in many instances, the two grand text-books of former days are less popular now. Neither the *Bible*, nor the *Shorter Catechism* is either so commonly, or so wisely used as when each home was a Sabbath-school. Few, if any, of our young people, get the solid instruction they once got in doctrinal subjects. What the Church requires most of all to-day is more thorough, downright, earnest teaching, both in our families and in Sabbath-schools. At no time was more solid instruction given, and a surer basis laid of moral and religious development, than when intelligent teachers in the Sabbath-school, and especially faithful parents at home, made the shorter catechism their text-book of systematic theology, and the treasury of Bible instruction.

A change has come over the Church, and we feel confident that the *International Lessons* are, in part, the cause of what we all deplore. But, while accepting fully what is good in the latter, there is no need for giving up the former. Let us rather combine what is good in both; and, therefore, we urge, most earnestly, a return to the good old way of teaching thoroughly the shorter catechism as the grandest

epitome of Bible-truth ever made. And if it has not the prominence it once had in our schools, this becomes a stronger reason why we should make it all the more prominent in our homes. A Presbyterian Church cannot live without Bible instruction. Our very existence depends on an intelligent acquaintance with the Word of God. And the best time, and place, and help for this noble work, is the catechism taught to the young by earnest, God-fearing parents, who feel the full responsibility of their charge—"Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY.

We know that no field left uncared for will ever run to *wheat*, but, in every case, to *weeds*. So, no untaught, untrained, uncared-for family will ever become Presbyterian in their belief. To produce such fruits as have grown for generations with such profusion and happy results in Scotland and the North of Ireland, demands intelligent Christian culture, for it does not come by chance, nor is it ever found in neglected homes. That form of belief, known as Presbyterian, which we hold to be the purest form of New Testament worship, both in doctrine and polity, can be produced only by earnest training, for it is not a natural growth in the depraved

human heart. It will invariably be found—as many instances in every age go to show—that the children who grow up in worldly, careless, prayerless, catechismless homes, will, naturally, degenerate to some lower type of religious life, where they will be more at home than under Presbyterian teaching, if they do not go to swell the great army of the unwashed, un-Church-going heathen that abound throughout our land, and especially in our towns and greater centres of population. As a Church, we must either train our children or die. And if we have not religion in the *home*, we will not have it long in the *pew*. And yet many homes are criminally neglected by those who have taken the most solemn vows to teach their children by both precept and example. There is a sharply-marked tendency among parents to turn over the whole matter of the religious instruction of their children to the Sabbath-school. And if our schools are made the substitute for home training, they will prove to be hinderances, and not helps in preparing the way of the Lord. “The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but He blesseth the habitation of the just.”—Prov. iii., 33. And here we come upon

WOMAN'S TRUE SPHERE OF WORK AND INFLUENCE
IN THE CHURCH.

While elders and deacons seem to have been the only two classes formally set apart officially to the work of the Church, they were not the only classes that worked for the Church's upbuilding. In Rom. xvi., Paul greets both men and women whom he regarded as co-workers ; and at the very head of the list stands the name of Phœbe, a devout Christian woman and active worker in the Church of Cenchrea. Priscilla and Aquila—a married couple—are also named, but the wife's name preceding that of her husband as being—what many wives are to-day—the more earnest and active worker of the two ; while he makes mention of many other godly women—true help-meets in the Lord's work.

In the Church to-day many new spheres of labour are opening up which women can occupy with great advantage, and bear noble testimony to the Lord. It is an obvious fact, that were it not for women who, like their sisters in the olden times love to linger around the cross, visit the sepulchre of our Saviour, or minister to him in loving deeds, many of our prayer-meetings might be closed, our Sabbath-schools would have few teachers, many of our Church organizations would soon cease to have a name, our congregational life would wither away, our social meetings,

mission work, district visiting, in short, Christian enterprise in every department, would be suspended. Unless woman's instinctive sagacity, keener perceptions, and tenderer sympathies peculiarly fitted her for nursing the sick, and visiting the afflicted—always a large part of Christian work. Meanwhile, women's missionary associations promise to develop greatly the energy and efficiency of the Church in this great department of labour, and many noble women are now going out to the foreign field to tell of Jesus and the Resurrection. We rejoice in all their Christian activity, and wish it multiplied a thousandfold. We regard all this as an omen for good, and would not say a word that would detract from its importance.

THE HOME HER MAIN SPHERE OF INFLUENCE.

Notwithstanding all this, we hesitate not to affirm that it is in and through the *family*, and home-life, that woman's influence is to tell most powerfully in the Church and on Society. This must ever be her special and distinctive sphere of labour, and from this centre the great moral forces are produced that will move the world. While often occupying, with efficiency and rich spiritual results, other spheres and lines of Christian labour, still, her influence is mainly and most healthily through her family and in her home.

Pious wives and mothers, quiet, retiring, unostentatious, of large, practical common-sense, such as we suppose the cousins Mary and Elizabeth to have been; or Martha and Mary, of Bethany—women whose names may never be mentioned when public affairs are discussed, who are never dreamt of when conventions are held, whose names are never thought of when a class of modern so-called Christian workers are eulogized and occupy the front benches, invariably absent from every mutual adulation society, where self-constituted saints meet to purr over one another,—these are the ones of whom the Master says, ‘*Well done!*’ Wise, loving, earnest, gentle women, like all those in the Gospel story, the aroma of whose memory fills the Church, as the evening glory crowns the hill-tops. They are women who would shrink from publicity in all its forms, who prefer going in the early morning, while it is yet dark, to embalm the body of Jesus with the love of their heart, and going before anyone is astir; or, who linger by the cross long after everyone else has gone home. These are the Christian workers who labour at the foundations that lie out of sight of public inspection. Women like these, free from tattle, tale-bearing, gossip in all its forms; their hearts filled with their own great, solemn purpose, but whose womanly, decided Christian bearing is manifest and

approved by all who know them ; women whose walk is close with God, whose grace is diffused through their home, who train their children in the fear of the Lord, daily impressing upon them the sin of lying, dishonesty, meanness of spirit, evil speaking, and the need of forming a good, strong, Christ-like character ; mothers whose daily care it is to make the home a fitting place for the Master to visit, and where he loves to come, do more for the kingdom of Christ and the good of men than many who flaunt before the public gaze, and who are ambitious of being regarded as moral reformers.

What weighty admonitions the Apostle gives ; and though some think his advice is a little old-fashioned, it is as much needed as ever, and, if taken, it would work many blessed changes.—Titus iii., 3-5. Dreadfully prosaic advice for this Nineteenth Century ! Why, there are nothing but common duties mentioned ! He allows no room for enterprise ! no recognition of woman's rights in their modern sense ! " Love your husbands ! love your children ! keepers at home ! discreet, chaste, etc ! " How dreadfully commonplace ! Not even a word about attending conventions ! Probably the Apostle would have spoken differently had he lived in this age of higher education for women ! " That the women be in behaviour as becometh the Gospel. " " Let the women

adorn themselves in modest apparel, and with good works, as becometh women professing godliness." He speaks of some who learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things that they ought not: "Let all such learn to *guide* the house, and give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."

The sins Paul pointed out are still common, and the graces he inculcates need as careful cultivation as ever. We cannot improve on Apostolic teaching, and the fact that these virtues are the commonplaces that cluster around home-life, makes them all the more precious. Though nothing could fly more directly in the face of modern tendencies than the lessons contained in this brief paragraph, yet the woman who follows Paul's advice is a true help-meet, and a Christian worker in the noblest sense. Such a woman cannot go anywhere without carrying a benediction with her. According to the Divine judgment, woman's best adorning is not the plaiting of her hair, the wearing of gold or putting on of goodly apparel, but *good works*. These are the jewels and adorning which give her beauty in the eyes of both God and man. The pious Sarah, fit companion for Abraham, the friend of God, the modest Rebecca, the tender Rachel, the humble Ruth, the sweet wife

of Elkanah, the anxious Martha, the devout Mary, the practical Dorcas—noble women, all,—these are true workers in the vineyard of the Lord.

VALUE OF PERSONAL AND QUIET DUTIES.

One of the most blessed things we learn in the Gospel is the value our Saviour puts on *little things*,—the cup of cold water ; faithful in a few things, etc. It is *quality* and not *quantity* He esteems. He asks not *how much* we do, but *how* we do it. No deed, even the smallest, is common that springs from a heart wholly consecrated to Him. And if we would bring a holy life to Christ, and offer Him the broken and contrite spirit, we must be as careful of our *fire-side* duties, as we are of the duties of the sanctuary.

In our religious life, as in our social, we are apt to conform to what is public, popular, and attended with *éclat*. And yet the mightiest influences this world has ever seen have proceeded from quiet souls, that have, like some of the great forces in nature, been nourished in secret. To be the means of giving an impulse to some great man, as his teacher did to Martin Luther. And no one knows when he does his greatest service. As the flower dies when the seed is forming, so, many yield the richest results through those whom they have trained and taught the ways of God. Obscure themselves, they have

lived in their descendants. Jesse may be no great figure in history, but David was, and the training of David was a grand work for the Lord. Zechariah and Zebedee were not large men when compared with the two Johns—the Baptist and the Apostle. Our best service does not consist in great works done in public. Philip probably did his greatest service when he preached a sermon to one hearer in the chariot, while he and the eunuch rode together.

All Christian workers must have the spirit of their Master, and work as if their Saviour were standing by their side and witnessing their works of faith and labours of love. Like Him, too, we must learn to do little things well ; for nothing is really little that bears on man's life and destiny. Many can do the great that fail in the little. Many are heroic when the world is witnessing them and ready to shout applause, who are cowards in the secret of their own hearts. Because the ten talents have not been committed to us, we hide the one in a napkin. Peter said he could *die* for his Master, but he could not *keep awake* for him. Never despise duty, however small or obscure. Many seem to live and prepare for one deed, speaking one word, or sending one message. It seems a small contribution, but on the scale of eternity it is mighty. That one deed, or word, or message, may live in the memory and heart

of generations, and streams of blessing may flow from that fountain opened through all the ages to come.

John Newton was seven years old when his mother died. All that he remembered of her was her praying for him with her hands on his head, and the tears rolling down her earnest face. He always believed his conversion was in answer to her prayers. Newton was, in turn, instrumental in guiding the mind of Cowper at a critical time of his spiritual history, and his songs will cheer the Church during all the days of her pilgrimage. Cowper, in turn, led Carey to the Saviour. Carey went out to India, and his work eternity alone will reveal. And all this wide stream of blessing flows from the little fountain—an earnest mother praying to the God of the covenant for her darling boy—a mother of whom the world knows nothing but this fact. But how much the world owes to this mother! and what encouragement to others to go and do likewise!

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL.

And who may not work for this Master? True, the best and the noblest are unworthy to unloose the latchet of Christ's shoes, yet a sinful woman may wash His sacred feet. Personal merit may not touch His shoe-latchet, but love may kiss His feet; and

the love that poured the ointment upon them was more precious to Him than all the perfume of Araby the Blest. Through the door of love who may not enter His service and minister to Him? And, though He may have committed to your keeping but the one talent, there is nothing your Saviour would have you do for Him that He has not given you the means to accomplish.

On the other hand, what compensation does a woman make to society, who inflicts upon the public a few hysterical addresses or crude sermonettes, but robs it of its noble men and women, when, by her neglect, she has allowed her home to go to confusion and her children to grow up savages. "Woman's Rights" is one of the stock phrases of our day. But the attainment of these, in the sense in which some women seem to understand the term, is the establishment of baby's wrongs, and a blight on the public weal. God never calls any mother to leave her home duties for outside work. Those who are freed from such ties may engage in such work as their abilities and conscience may prompt; but every married woman must find her chief sphere of labour largely at home. She must retire gladly and lovingly into Christ's inner Church, and occupy her precious hours in the holy ministry of the home—that Church in the house—which is often one of the sweetest sanctuaries

on earth, whose sacredness has overshadowed us, and which we feel till the last day of life. As it has been very pithily put, by a recent writer, "Samuel was not brought up on a ma's feeding-bottle, while his mother went gallivanting off to Shiloh three times a year with Hannah." These were the days of repose in homes; so she looked after her nursling three years at home. Give me a wise, loving mother in the Christian home, training her children for the Lord, and I will show you the true Christian worker, the real home missionary. A home with Christ as its centre, under the loving care of a wise, God-fearing mother, and God and eternity alone can reveal the extent of such a one's influence. And if this seems to be a contracted sphere, make it all the more intense, as the lens gathers the scattered rays on one bright focus.

"But surely you will make an exception of the minister's wife!" remarks someone at this point, she must take the lead in all good works! But why the minister's wife more than any other Christian woman? We affirm that that wife who makes the home of her husband a scene of peace and joy, that guards his precious hours from needless intrusion, that keeps all tattle and gossip from his ears—the small insinuations of smaller people—and sends him up to his pulpit each Sabbath in good spirits, in good health, and

throws the sunshine of her own heart around all his work, is doing most for his people, as well as for himself, whether they know it or not.

Woman's grand sphere of power is elsewhere, and through other modes of working. In looking back upon the history of the Church, and the many leading men who have been instrumental in guiding her movements, we find there is scarcely any of these great men of God but had the help, the sympathy, and co-operation of some warm-hearted, devout female friend—a wife, a sister, a mother—who was the inspiration and promoter of their great life-work. We find mothers, with tears and prayers, dedicating their sons to the service of the Gospel, and encouraging them to abandon their professions as lawyers, *littérateurs*, rhetoricians, and many a secular calling, that they might follow Christ in the preaching of his truth. And these men of God were seconded and strengthened in all noble endeavours and acts of self-denial by some noble woman, whose heart was full of the truth which she loved. Such was the mother of Augustine, the wife of John Knox, the mother of the Wesleys, the wife of David Livingstone, and many another known only to the Great Task-Master, for whom they were content to labour in secret. Verily they shall not lose their reward. After the self-sacrifice of the Saviour, the sublimest self-denial and the

purest love is that of a woman. There is nothing on this earth more in sympathy with the Saviour and His mission of salvation, than the heart of a woman sanctified by His grace, and the Redeemer sees no truer pattern of His own life. Christian women! well may you work earnestly for the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of the great deliverance it has wrought out for you, and the blessed influence of that Gospel upon the social and moral condition of woman. Separated from the sweet charities of life, and the all-purifying power of the Gospel, what burdens have your sisters not borne, and to what degradation have they not been reduced! But from being the toy of man's pleasure, or the slave of his passions, the Gospel lifts woman up, and declares her to be *man's helpmeet*. And by the sweeter intuitions of her heart, and the tenderer graces of her sensibilities, she, in turn, smoothes the asperities of life, and becomes the sweetener of earth's sorrows.

Anything that touches woman, touches the moral life of the world. When the young women of a place are giddy, frivolous, shallow, ignorant, and given over to the vulgar display of cheap decorations, it must prove a most deadly blight on the community. On the contrary, where the young women are intelligent, sober-minded, chaste, lovers of good things, a joy, a help, an inspiration,—as cheerful as

the song of birds, and as pure as the opening flowers of spring,—it is the richest benediction God can send a people. Our young men could not then afford to be ninnies and nondescripts, occupying the medial line between the sexes—mere clothes-pegs for men-millinery.

Women, if you could only feel, through one strong impulse, one holy experience, your indebtedness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you surely never could encourage those tendencies to worldliness and frivolity that so largely defeat the work of the Church.

The early ages were blessed with many such women, noble examples of devotion and intense earnestness, who regarded it as their life-work to inspire and second the heroic efforts of a husband, a son, a brother, urging them to consecrate themselves to the service of Christ. And in this world there is no grander or wider sphere of influence.

Would that such devotion and loving service were more common. For not till the last day, and the doom of this world is sealed, shall it be known how many of all those who swell the ranks of the redeemed have been owing to the quiet, unostentatious, earnest, humble efforts of God-fearing women, whom the world never knew, and who never desired that the world should know them.

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THE HOME-LIFE OF OUR LORD.

Thy holy child Jesus.—Acts iv., 27.

And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them ; but his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.—Luke ii., 51, 52.

And he came to Nazareth, where *he had been brought up*, and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up for to read.—Luke iv., 16.

Thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to speak with thee.—Luke viii., 20.

For neither did his brethren believe in him.—John vii., 5.

THE HOME-LIFE OF OUR LORD.

The Gospel begins with the story of a family. It is a wonderful home-scene—a father, a mother, and a little babe are there ; and thus the New Testament opens with a picture of idyllic purity which can never lose its charm. No religion that begins thus, in the very heart of humanity, could ever lose its character or force. In that home,—type of all others,—we have the grand unit of human life—THE FAMILY. In that quiet, peaceful home of Nazareth, the hopes of humanity are cradled. Who can measure the blessedness of any true home ? How much less this home, where Joseph was its guide and support, the home which Mary sweetened by her presence, and into which Jesus himself brought the very light and love of Heaven. What a model for all our homes, where the child grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man—a home, simple, natural, contented, pure.

The home of Nazareth ought to correct the insincerities and artificial bondage of our times, and diffuse

a sweeter, healthier atmosphere around us, where childhood and the dawn of life's morning may brighten into the holy light of a mother's love and a father's tender care. But woe be to that home from whose sacred precincts all love and fondness, all gentleness and the fear of the Lord have fled, and where nothing is left but contention, peevishness, distrust, and alienation of heart. And woe be to the children that have such an environment! Of all scenes on earth, the Christian home comes nearest to the bliss of Heaven, which is itself presented to us as a home and a family gathering, freed from all care, exempt from all sorrow, kept from all sin, the children delivered from everything that can hurt or disturb, and living in the light of the Father's face. No place is nearer Heaven than the Christian home: "Here we have the holiest altars, the wisest teachers, the tenderest love, the sweetest graces, and the most lasting influences."

HIS INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD.

He was born as other little infants are born, lay in His mother's arms in soft, sweet slumber; she fondled Him on her knee, and pressed Him to her heart. He awoke, and slept, and awoke again, and was nourished like all other infants, and thus the gladsome years passed by.

From His infancy till He reached the age of twelve, when the sole recorded incident of His boyhood is given us, we have no history of His life. Those wondrous years are covered by one statement—“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” And Mary, His mother, had much to ponder in her heart. What a perfect mould the young life was cast in, to fill up the symmetry of this Divine ideal! “The grace of God was upon him.” What a warm, pure atmosphere to breathe, and to be surrounded by! What a blessed life to live, and what a full, rich pattern of our own! For the life which He lived in the flesh is the model of the one we have to live now.

He was a child before He was a man, and had all the experiences of a child. For the boy Jesus of the Gospels was a real boy, as He was afterwards a most natural man. He knew all the stages of growth, from childhood to manhood, and had a babe’s experience of knowing nothing; the child’s, of knowing only a little; for He grew in wisdom as he grew in stature—the universal necessity of development.

HIS EARLY TRAINING.

The holy child Jesus was trained in a home of pious refinement, though His parents were poor, and throughout His life He bore the marks of that

training which He received under Mary's roof. *Mary brought Him up.* What a lesson is conveyed to all mothers by the fact that Jesus was brought up by His mother, who regarded this as her sweetest and grandest work! So many young people *grow*, like Topsy. They have no Christian care or culture bestowed on them. All is yielded to their own will, and that will is merely the whim of the hour, and the natural result is seen in the waywardness, the folly, the griefs, that characterize so many homes, and which the Church so deeply deplures. Want of early training is the ready explanation of much that is seen in society to-day, and which does more to defeat the energies of the Church than any other known cause. But *Mary brought Jesus up.* Even He had been to His mother the object of much earnest, anxious, yearning, loving care. And the most momentous of all this mother's concerns was the training of that holy child who had been committed to her keeping. And to preserve her home for the Lord is still the chief work of every mother, from which no outside work can ever free her. Many mothers think that this would circumscribe their energies, and that God has called them to a more public service. And while they profess to engage in what they are pleased to call Christian work, they

leave their homes to become bear-gardens, and the Lord is not honoured by this mistaken choice.

Jesus never forgot His mother's early care of Him, and how much He was under obligation to her who had nursed Him at her breast, and fondled Him on her knee, in his helpless infancy. Mary was the human instrument employed in impressing a knowledge of the Scriptures, and the fear of the Lord, on the young mind and heart of her son ; for the truths that filled her heart now, filled His in the after years of His life. How tenderly and beautifully this plant grew up, which the Father had planted in the garden of Mary's home ! And what tender emotions filled His soul when He came to say good-bye to Nazareth, and leave the place dear to Him by a thousand associations and tender memories of home life !

HIS OBEDIENCE TO HIS PARENTS.

This was just what might have been expected to follow as the natural result of such training as His. How fondly Jesus cherished all the obligations that His home imposed upon Him, and how He revered that most fundamental of all relationships, and honoured His father and mother as He would have us do. At first His mother felt hurt at His remaining behind them in Jerusalem—"Son, why hast thou dealt with us thus, thy father and I have sought thee

sorrowing ?” But how readily He left behind all the attractions of the great city, and went home with His parents to that obscure little village. And then, it is added, in one of those wonderfully suggestive sentences, for which God’s Word is remarkable—“He remained *subject to his parents*.” One stroke completes a grand picture: a flood of light is let in on His whole domestic and filial relations. He put Himself lovingly under the control of His parents, going and coming at their bidding, ever ready to run an errand, or do a turn, or save the steps of His mother, to anticipate her wish and brighten the home, for love to her lay at the root of His life. He engaged in His humble tasks and quiet duties without a murmur, and thus He proved Himself a perfect son, a loving brother, and a true friend.

How much brighter and better would many of our homes become if His example were more closely followed, and father and mother honoured, as they deserve to be, by all their children. Many young lads become too wise to take advice; they think they know more than either father or mother, and grow restive under parental control, and do everything under protest. What a rebuke to all such conduct is the example of Him who, during all the years He was in His home, remained subject to His parents!

HIS EARLY AND SILENT YEARS.

What a holy reserve hangs over the early years of our Lord's life. Just where curiosity is most anxious to put questions, it is met with solemn silence. There is reticence on all subjects that minister to curiosity without producing spiritual results—His appearance, stature, complexion, colour of hair, eyes, or of what temperament:—what His parents thought of Him; what His brothers and sisters thought of Him when He lived in the home with them: what impression He made on those with whom He was associated; did He yield to the ordinary impulses of youth and engage heartily in amusements? The silence of Scripture on these subjects is most expressive, and we must walk with reverent feet through the secret sanctuaries of our Lord's life.

Our Lord's home-life has a peculiar and special interest for us, and shows that our real life is not the one lived in publicity and before the gaze of the world, but the unseen life lived in the secret places of the Most High. It also shows that every true life of service must be preceded by long years of quiet preparation, with nothing but God and our own conscience to urge us on. Our Lord's early years, lived in the home of Nazareth, come nearer to us by way of example, than the later and more public periods when He was living His life of active service.

His life under Mary's roof, in the quiet of those early home-scenes, spent in the midst of His daily duties and household cares, was more like the life we have to live, through the dull routine of our every-day engagements. And these test our character more than public engagements do, for in these we have the stimulus of the approbation, or disapprobation, of thousands. The Jesus of *Nazareth* is more of a pattern to us than the Jesus of *Gethsemane*, or the Jesus of *the Cross*, or of His miraculous works. The great lesson of His life, as interpreted by Himself, was, that we should be engaged in our Father's business, in the field, or the shop, the office, or market, even more than in the public walks of Christian effort ; for this latter is the duty of the few, but the former, of the thousands. God was with Him, even at the carpenter's bench, and solitude, to Him, was just another name for communion with His Father. Our Lord's quiet hours, and His unnoticed years, are worthy of study, in this age of bustle, demonstrations, conventions, public oratory, endless meetings, and general fussiness of the flesh. At this particular time, there is great danger of mistaking the ostentation of the old man for the zeal of the new one. The tendency to-day is to court publicity and notoriety, and to crowd out the quiet hours of reflection and devotion, so necessary to feed

and sustain the life that is hid with Christ in God. Every public life must rest on, and be fed by, this inner, secret, unseen life as its proper root.

Jesus not only put Himself lovingly under parental authority, and submitted to all the claims of an ordinary household as son, brother, friend, and citizen, but He lived in so quiet and natural a way, that His most intimate friends—even His own brethren and nearest relatives—saw no special marks of His Messiahship. Nathanael, though living close by, had never heard of Him, and was surprised at what was now told him—"Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" In this way, through the long, silent years, He was being prepared for His work, built up in body and mind for the three years of consuming labour, that were so soon to follow.

HIS RELATION TO THE OTHER MEMBERS.

Much of the comfort and peace of a home depends on the mutual esteem and sympathy, the consideration and forbearance, of its inmates. If misunderstanding and alienated affection enter, then the very conditions of happiness are destroyed. Beside Jesus, there were other members who were either His own brothers and sisters, or who, at least, stood to Him in this relation.

How few homes are happy, with no drawbacks

from selfishness, bad tempers, and want of consideration ! As a handful of sand, thrown in among polished machinery, jars, so there is more or less of friction in most homes. And the home of Nazareth was no exception, for Jesus had His own peculiar domestic griefs, the chief of which was the want of sympathy on the part of the other members. His mother, who had been proud of Him, now began to be greatly disappointed at the course He was beginning to shape out for Himself. His brethren thought they knew better than He did, what line of conduct He ought to pursue, and so they came to give Him advice. During the years He had lived with them, His life had been so natural and gentle, and, in many respects, so like their own, they could not bring themselves to believe He was so much greater than they were, and there may have been a measure of envy at His growing popularity. They passed cold criticisms on His actions, sought to compel Him to return home, for they had fears for His safety, and some doubts about His sanity.

It is quite evident that Mary sympathized with the others as against Him. And hardest of all to bear were the reflections of His own mother, whom He tenderly loved. Jesus would like to please her, and please them all, but He must do His Father's will, and finish His Father's work, and that came in other

forms, and in different spheres, than she or they had imagined. So the proverb was fulfilled—"A skeleton in every house"; a worm at the root of every budding joy, a shadow across the pathway of every sunny prospect. No tongue can tell what trouble it brought to His heart that, "Neither did His brethren believe in Him." The members of His own family left Him to be ministered to by strangers, and the women who waited upon Him were not His sisters, but kind hearts found among strangers, who gave to Him of their substance.

Want of sympathy at home must have been to His sensitive nature one of His severest trials. There is no unappreciated member of any of our homes who can say, "I have trials to endure in this respect which my Lord had no experience of, and did not endure before me." For He who was in all points tempted like as we are, bore those trials also—the alienated affections of those who were closest on earth to Him, even the reflections of His own mother. Jesus quietly endured this wrong, and waited till the shadows passed by, and a diviner peace united all hearts in one. It was a temporary misunderstanding, that did not lessen His affection for them. He lived for them, He prayed for them; and one of His appearances after His resurrection was personally and alone to James, His own brother, who when

convinced himself acquainted all the others, and this may be the explanation of the removal of all their doubts. For mother and brethren, along with the Apostles, swelled the enthusiasm that gathered around His resurrection life, and shared the joys that filled all their hearts. It is a sweet picture that closes the scene. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren." How our Lord's example ought to encourage us to overlook temporary misunderstandings, and to pray and work for those who are our own flesh and blood, and, in consequence, have a double claim upon our Christian sympathies!

THE SCENES OF HIS YOUTH.

He was attached to Nazareth, and thought of it as He did of no other place. He cherished it fondly, as everyone does the place of his birth and boyhood. Its gentle slopes, over which light and shadow chased each other during the long summer day; the valley, carpeted with early blossoms; the fringes of the wooded vales; the crystal brooks, making sweet music as they went; the wide prospect, from the vale of the Jordan to the sparkling waters of the blue Mediterranean; the singing birds on many a bough; the quaint little houses and narrow streets, were all an

attraction to Him. And, because He was human, He felt bound to the place where He had been brought up by a thousand tender associations, and it cost His heart a pang to leave it, and He felt all the more keenly the rough treatment He received when He returned to the early scenes of His life. I have often striven to imagine the scene of our Lord's return to Nazareth after His first preaching tour, and His farewell to the place where He had lived for thirty years.

When He stood up to read, His words were so sweet, His aspect so tender and gracious, that all admired Him, and felt honoured by the fame of a fellow-countryman. But they begin to ask : " Is not this the carpenter's son ? Is not Mary His mother ? His brothers and sisters, are they not all here with us ? Do we not know them all very well ? What right then has He to assume any airs of superiority, or be different from any of us ? When we are all commonplace, what right has He to be anything else ? " And so, as the flush of beauty fades from the evening clouds, and leaves all cold and gray, so their admiration changed to indifference, and that into alienation and hatred, and, at last, they rush upon Him to drag Him forth to throw Him over the precipice. But He passed through the midst of them and went His way, and never returned to that humble roof that

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had sheltered Him so long, and never preached more in their little synagogue. But those early memories continued to dwell in His heart, and He parted from His friends now with regret.

HIS DEVOUT SPIRIT.

Here we do not refer specially to His long sessions of prayer, so emphasized in the life He lived in the flesh—"He went out and departed into a solitary place and there prayed: He withdrew into the wilderness and prayed: He continued all night in prayer, etc." These were not merely communings with His Father, but were often the cry of an anxious soul, an earnest calling upon God for help, the expressed dependence of a weary heart that longed for rest.

But we refer rather to His habits of *public worship*, and the honour He put upon the House of God. How remarkable that statement—"As His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day," etc. From childhood His place in the synagogue was never found vacant. In childhood He worshipped as a child, and in manhood He worshipped as a man. Who doubts that a little child can worship God? Has God Himself not said that He has perfected praise out of the mouth of babes? While living in Nazareth, a part of His bringing up was

the custom He had of worshipping each Sabbath with His parents in the synagogue.

If ever there lived a man who might deem public worship unworthy of him, and quite unnecessary to nourish his spiritual life, Jesus was that man, and we can suppose that, with good reason, He might have excused Himself from membership in a Church that was by no means a pure communion, and never a very inviting service. If any one could do it, we might suppose Him to have preferred the green hills and leafy bowers, the shady stream and flowery dells around Nazareth: those bright spring mornings, richly laden with the perfume of early blossoms, under the wide dome of heaven—the great temple of nature—to the close, stifling air of the little synagogue. But Jesus never once did this. Nor did He ever go out boating on the Sea of Galilee for pleasure. But He regularly waited on the ordinances of God's house, and as He listened to the Scriptures read, and took part in the hymns and prayers of that divine worship, He was brought into spiritual fellowship with the great and the good of every age. It was to His soul as the very gate of Heaven, and He rejoiced in that union that made Him one with all that had ever worshipped God in spirit and in truth. He felt as David before Him had felt—"One day in Thy courts is better than a thousand." Did that

worshipper prove Himself to be a help or a hinderance in the synagogue? Few sermons could be less instructive than those He heard from many a formal preacher, and few sacred services could be less inviting. Was this worshipper among the fault-finders and obstructionists who stirred up trouble? Or was He among the earnest, the devout, the useful, whose presence is always an inspiration? If anything was to be done, or help required, if any weary, discouraged souls needed sympathy and care, they were sure of finding it in Him. I do not believe He ever went forward at the close of the service to grumble or complain, to worry the preacher, or leave stinging words in the breast of anyone that was doing the best he knew how.

If our Lord's custom of attending public worship were imitated by all His professed people, how many vacant places would be filled up in our churches, and how much more hearty many a dead service would become! How fruitful of excuses many are against regular attendance on public worship! The day is very hot, or it is very cold; it is very wet, or it is very dry; we have been unusually busy during the week, and need the Sabbath to rest our exhausted frame; or we are not very well and must take a little medicine (and it is wonderful how many are poorly

on the Sabbath), and they will wait all the week in order to take it on the Sabbath day.

Jesus never seems to have had any of these excuses. The house of God was a joy to Him, and we may suppose that never, on any Sabbath, was His seat vacant; and the sweet, earnest, devout, loving worshipper was always an inspiration, and He was never found combining with a clique to have the rabbi removed. Like the bee, that gathers honey from soot when the flowers fail it, so He drew all the sweetness and nutriment out of the service, and every day His soul was refreshed by the public worship in God's house.

THE SACRED RESERVE.

We have said there is a wonderful reticence on all that does not minister to our spiritual profit, and idle curiosity is always baffled. We would like to know more of His home-life, but the scenes were too tender to be spread out before curious eyes. On one or two occasions the curtain is lifted, and we get a glimpse of the *manner* of that life, and from that a fond fancy loves to picture the whole. We are told that He grew in wisdom and stature: He remained subject to His parents: He was in the habit of going to worship in the synagogue on the Sabbath: He was a *carpenter*, and was called the carpenter's son; and, from His supposed want of early education, those

who knew Him best wondered at His wisdom, showing that they did not expect such manifestations from Him. But, with these exceptions, and the one inimitable anecdote told of Him when twelve years of age, His infancy and early years remain unnoticed ; a veil of concealment is drawn over them. Yet that life of thirty years was actually lived, and it was all spent in His father's business. His relation to His parents, His brothers and sisters, His friends and early companions, must have been full of interest. His words and deeds in the home, even then, were worthy of Him who was the Son of the Highest, as well as the son of Mary. And seeing that home-life—the proper conduct of young people toward their parents and each other—forms such an important part of our duty, we might suppose that more would have been told us of that life spent in the home at Nazareth under the roof of Joseph and Mary : how He filled up His time ; to what extent and in what way He engaged in manual labour ; what were His recreations and amusements ; His personal appearance ; the relation He sustained to the villagers, and many another subject beside.

But to have revealed these, would have made that wondrous life too common. It was too sacred to be trampled in the mire of a mere worldly interest ; the curious eye may not scan it. It was the life of the

holy child Jesus, lived in the presence of His Father. This silence on the part of the Evangelists was not owing to any lack of information, for John's house had furnished a home for Mary, and during those later years fond memory would often revert to those early scenes in Nazareth, as they lay mirrored in the wondrous life. And John must have had many conversations with her about it, and yet he, of all others, says nothing about it. We wonder at the years of silence, but He grew in silence as He grew in stature. Noise is associated with building, but silence with growth. So Jesus grew in that quiet home, as the flowers grow that turn their faces to the sun. And if we are to grow in spiritual stature, it must be by drinking in quietly the light from the face of God, in holy, silent, loving communion with Him. And while imagination will continue to draw its ideal pictures, and fill up the blank spaces, we must travel with soft footsteps over scenes made sacred by such a life, and not break in on the silent sanctities by idle speculation or unprofitable curiosity.

But let us cull a few flowers that grow within this inclosure. The innocent children noticed by Him as they played in the green grass, braided with the early blossoms of spring; His fondling little children in His arms and pressing them to His heart; the picture of a father unable to resist his child's plea; His

reading the feelings of a mother's yearning heart, or a father's anguish ; with many a fond picture besides of home and childhood, are all personal recollections, and show that His mind often went back to the happy, early memories of Nazareth. His life all through must have been very attractive, for though, at times, His presence was impressive and awe-inspiring, yet He inspired strong personal friendship, and to all who came seeking Him He was so easy of approach that men drew to Him as children run to their mother, while the very outcasts felt as if summer had come to their souls, when He looked upon them. And though it is recorded of Him only twice, yet must it have often happened, that, on many a summer evening, as the soft light faded away, little children sat on His knees, and looked up into that sweet face with fondness, and saw in it all the love of Heaven, till they fell asleep on His bosom.

How dear it makes home to think that Jesus was brought up by a mother amid the common cares and labours of a household. For that home in which Jesus was brought up, had, like all others, its own anxieties and sorrows. But sweet must have been that atmosphere of holy trust that sanctified all these. In such a soil did this tree of righteousness grow, for He lived among other children and young people, and performed all the duties of son and brother.

Hence the unconscious babe in the cradle, or in its mother's arms, has a Saviour that once lay there in sweet, helpless innocence. The little prattling feet are passing along where the child Jesus has gone before it. And the love of brothers and sisters for each other is ennobled by the love which Jesus bore to those who stood in this relation to Him. He carried the joyousness of His early years into His opening ministry, which was bright and cheerful, for He began it amid scenes of social and domestic happiness, and His mother's house was His first temple. Our homes are all the more sacred and peaceful because of His. And in all this world there is none so patient, so lenient and considerate, as He who became my brother in the flesh. And there is nothing my dearest friend can do for me that goes into all the wants and cares of the soul like His blessed ministry—a ministry laden with the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.



THE PRACTICAL USES OF THE BAPTISM
OF INFANTS.

Every man-child among you shall be circumcised . . . and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and thee.—Gen. xvii., 10, 11.

And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac, being eight days old, as God had commanded him.—Gen. xxi., 4.

And when she was baptized and her household.—Acts xvi., 15.

And was baptized, he and all his, straightway.—Acts xvi., 33.

I baptized also the household of Stephano.—1 Cor. i., 16.

Greet the church that is in their house.—Rom. xvi., 5.

Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.—1 Cor. vii., 14.

USES OF INFANT BAPTISM.

It is sometimes asked, What purpose is served by the baptism of infants? What good does it do them? It is the old objection—What profit is there in circumcision? And we answer now as it was answered then: Much, every way. "If infant baptism were more improved it would be less disputed," said Philip Henry. The question is easily asked, What good does it do a child to baptize it? but it was just as easy and as common to ask, What good did it do a child to circumcise it? Yet it was commanded by God to be circumcised. And though we are more concerned in finding out the Divine will, yet we hope to be able also to point out some of the practical uses of the baptism of infants, and to show that the rite is *salutary* as well as *Scriptural*.

The parties to this solemn transaction are four, viz., the *parents*, the *child*, the *Church*, and the *Saviour*.

THE PARENTS.

They are the first and most deeply interested party. To them, especially, infant baptism has tender associa-

tions, peculiarly precious. Parents feel deeply solicitous for the eternal welfare of their offspring; their prayer is the prayer of Hagar—"O that Ishmael may live before Thee," and they long to bring their children within the bonds of the covenant. And the ordinance meets the deep yearning of every Christian parent's heart, enabling them to feel that their children are, with themselves, members of the visible Church, capable of grace and salvation, and, so far as children can be, made partakers of the privileges and blessings of the Gospel.

The right to present their child to the Lord in baptism depends on their own moral qualification. The parents' faith makes their child *holy*—1 Cor. vii., 14. The very act of baptism, therefore, suggests most solemn personal enquiry on the part of the parents—Am I a child of God? My child's standing depends on my own! Have I the faith that gives us both a standing in His kingdom? Or has my unbelief cut my child off? The very nature of the service implies self-examination and self-consecration. And it is in the spirit of hope, and earnest trust in the God of the Covenant, that the offering is made, with the earnest prayer that the Good Shepherd will accept this dear lamb and keep it forever within the fold. This covenant, at first, was a family covenant, in which God engaged to be the God of the *seed*, as of

the *father*, and the *seal* of the covenant was applied to the child. A father, by his own hand, may legally sign a bond which binds, not himself alone, but his children also; he may take an oath, and all his family are bound by it. And with the same propriety, but with far deeper significance, can he enter into the obligations of Christian baptism, and say, with Joshua, "Others may do as seemeth them good, but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

God rested the fulfilment of His covenant on the conduct of Abraham, as He rests it on our conduct now. "For I know *him* that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him."—Gen. xviii., 19. These truths must tend to deepen our sense of responsibility, and cause us to renew our vows of fidelity again and again, while we are constrained to ask, Are these pledges redeemed? And are we ourselves all that we desire our children to become?

The Saviour says to every parent in baptism, what Pharaoh's daughter said to the mother of Moses, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me."—Ex. ii., 9. A child is influenced by what it sees, hears, and learns in the home each day; the atmosphere in which it lives will determine the character of the child. Is the tone

of the home worldly, frivolous, vain? Is it mean, gossiping, envious, or avaricious? Or is it earnest, healthful, pure, and Christian? This will determine, more than anything else, the future of your child, and no technical training can take the place of that warm, subtle, pervasive influence with which a parents' faith and love fill his home. What a solemn charge it is! the care of an immortal soul! A child born into the world, whose future welfare is largely determined by its parents! Dear fathers and mothers, your children have been given you to be taught and trained for the Master, that they may be a seed to serve Him. The parent who makes his home Christless is false to the holiest obligations and the divinest duties of life. He who refuses to enter in through the gate of his family privileges, is robbing his children of their birthright. And what a burden to any home are godless children! Whenever such are sent forth upon the world, let parents ponder how far they are responsible!

If nothing else were secured by the baptism of infants than the making prominent of these truths, there would be enough to justify the practice, and show the wisdom of God in instituting it.

THE CHURCH, AND BAPTISM OF INFANTS.

The Church is another party represented in the ordinance of baptism, and holds relations to the child,

whom she recognizes and receives as a member ; to the parents, whom she seeks to encourage and aid, and to the God of the Covenant, whose promises she pleads.

From the fact that parents alone are usually addressed when their infants are baptized, and seldom, if ever, a single word is said to the congregation, the impression has become general that they alone are concerned in the ordinance. But when we consider the duties of the Church to the lambs of the flock, and with what solemnity she has been charged to feed those lambs, the Church's interests and welfare are as directly involved as those of the parents. Through baptism the Church adopts that child, and recognizes it as a member of the household of faith, and for the welfare of that child she pledges her prayers, example, experience, and influence. And when that child grows up to the years of understanding, the Church is bound to add her counsels, her sympathy and holy binding, along with those of the parents, that together they may take oversight of the flock, and the lambs may never be separated from the fold.

The baptized are not *aliens*, but *subjects* of the kingdom, in whom the Church must have the deepest concern, and upon whom she is bound to exert her best influences. She furnishes the *means of grace*, and co-operates with parents in the godly up-bringing

of the young. It is her duty to throw around her children every safeguard against sin, and to furnish them with all the motives of the Gospel for righteous conduct. The influence of the Sanctuary and of the Christian home must unite, and be a double guarantee that the religious training of the young will not be neglected ; and, surely, to every earnest-minded parent, such co-operation must be most encouraging. When the fire burns low on the hearth, the thought that the whole company of God's people have common interests and anxieties with ourselves, and by prayer and sympathy are co-operating with us for the same results, gives us the full benefit of Christian brotherhood, and shows us that what we do, we do in common with all saints, so that no parent must feel as if he stood alone and unsupported in his greatest work. I fear that many of our congregations have much to learn before they feel that baptism is no mere private, family transaction, but that the Church, no less than the parent, must take hold of the covenant and plead its promise.

It is only in the Christian Church, and in a land of Christian institutions, that the homes are the nurseries for God, and the children grow up a seed to serve Him. Pagan lands do not bear the fruits of faith ; the sin and unbelief of the father come as a blight upon the children, and the wickedness of one

generation is often transmitted to another, while God-fearing parents hand down their Sabbaths, their sanctuaries, and holy memories, and God blesses the children for the parents' sakes. Why are we confident that the heathen nations of to-day will still be heathen nations a hundred years hence, if the Gospel be not carried to them? Just because we know that unbelief is handed down from generation to generation, and the paganism of the father becomes the paganism of the child. And for the same reason we know that the Christian lands of to-day will be the Christian lands of the future, if they prove faithful to their trust; for the privileges of the Church descend in the line of the faithful. Such is the closeness of the connection between generation and generation, whether of faith, or of unbelief. Such is the heritage—so rich and bountiful—that comes from being connected with the visible Church of Christ, for from that God gathers His sons and daughters. Baptized children are, like Samuel, given to the Lord, borne on our heart before Him, held by our faith and encompassed by our prayers, and, therefore, in the channel of His blessing. By the direction of the Good Shepherd they are to be counted the lambs of His flock, to be treated as such, to be fed, trained, and tended as His. The sheep are not to be in the fold and the lambs left outside, but the lambs are to be

with the sheep as a part of the same flock. What blessed influences are in this way brought to bear on the minds and hearts of the young! It was after Abraham had given up his family to God that it was said of him, "I know that he will command his children and his household after him."

In every baptism service we are not looking on a purely private family transaction, for it is an ordinance of sacred associations to us all, and in which the Church at large, as well as the parents, has a direct interest. By this ordinance these little ones are recognized as members of the visible Church, which promises to take a wise, loving, and faithful oversight, to care for them as the lambs of the flock, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

I fear the Church does not clearly realise the true import of the baptism of her children, nor is she as faithful to the young under her charge as she should be, while it is to be feared that through her neglect many of the young are allowed to wander from the right ways of the Lord. Few have learned to appreciate the great power of this lever to lift up the rising race, or know what a hand of discipline it furnishes, by which she may hold her young together. When young people make shipwreck, all blame is laid at the door of the parents, and the Church seldom thinks of her own responsibility. And yet by her

criminal neglect, her Pharisaic or sectarian spirit, her worldly policy, and the chilly atmosphere that almost freezes, the Church may be as much to blame as the parents.

Is the atmosphere which the Church breathes around the home warm and pure? Or is there a chill, as from a north wind, coming in through the doors and windows? Is the Church dead, fanatical, sectarian, and rent by divisions? Or does she carry a benediction with her, as fresh from the presence of Christ? When she receives the child through baptism, is it into the earnest, loving, faithful school of Christ, where all manner of blessed help and influence will be enjoyed? Or will the Church, through neglect, only prove the minister of evil, and the grace of God fail because of her want of faith and labours of love? Much more must be done than is now common, to gather in and feed the lambs.

THE CHILDREN THEMSELVES.

The ordinance is theirs, for "The children of such as are members of the visible Church are to be baptized." Children of believers are themselves members of the Church, and are to receive baptism as the pledge of such membership, and a seal of the duties and privileges pertaining to it. Such are recognized as scholars to be taught in the school of

Christ. As the lambs of the flock, they are bound by their position to a life of obedience. They cannot grow up in a life of sin, without proving false to their standing as the children of the covenant. At their baptism the parent makes the fullest, strongest expression of Christian hope, and feels the warm glow of personal solicitude that they may grow up as the heirs of this inheritance. Though we must admit the sad fact that many who grow up in the Church not only stand aloof, but trample the law of Christ under foot ; yet why is it that our ranks are so often broken, and thousands lost to the Church ? One very obvious reason is that children have not been taught their place and privileges, and their standing, as baptized children, has not been taken advantage of, and they have not been made to feel the holy binding under which they lie, to live as the children of God. Instead of growing up children of the devil—for some future day of grace, if it ever come, let them be shown the glorious possibility of being Christ's from their infancy, that they may learn early to walk in all lowly obedience. We dare not doubt either the *possibility*, or the *fact*, that the Holy Spirit can make the young subjects of His gracious power, and seal their hearts from the beginning of their days. This is the blessed significance and intent of the baptism of infants.

But we must not expect too much from our

children—a life and experience beyond their years, a sobriety and seriousness, that would be unnatural and unreal. There is also a kind of teaching that requires in each and every case a conscious conversion within certain definite times. And in the popular mind this is, to a great extent, the test of grace. But the proper evidence of the work of the Spirit are the fruits of the Spirit, and, when these are growing in the heart, we need not seek other or better proofs.

We need less technicality, and more naturalness, and Christian parents must learn to speak in all simplicity to their children about the Saviour; that He loves them, takes care of them, wants them to love Him, and that prayer is just speaking to Him as one man speaks to another. That He who once fondled little children on His knee, or pressed them to His bosom, has the same wonderful, warm, earnest love for them still, and that His heart is open to receive them all. And tell this to your children in the same tone of voice, and in the same direct natural manner that you talk to them about other things. Make their way to the Saviour easy, and fewer would go astray, and become forever alienated.

THE PRESENCE OF THE SAVIOUR IN THE ORDINANCE.

Unless we can claim Him as present and sustaining intimate relations to parents, the child, and the Church,

our faith and hope would have nothing to rest upon, and the service would be unmeaning. But as the Church's Head, He has promised to fulfil His part of the covenant, and demands of us that we fulfil ours.

To parents He says, "The promise is to you and to your children"; "I will be a God to you and to your seed after you." This is just as much as to say, "What I have been to you I will also be to them. As I have chosen you, blessed you, kept you, and loved you, I will do all this to your children." In short, it means that He will be a God to them as He has been a God to us. And by all our own experiences of the Divine goodness we may know what is in store for our children, and what a rich future is opening up for them, if they rely on His promises. This is the legitimate resting-place of every believing parent, and if, in the providence of God, they are taken away before their children grow up, it is given them to know that they are in the direct line of descent from the Father of the Faithful, whose children are as the sand upon the sea-shore for multitude.

But to the children themselves the Lord is no less near. They are to be called *holy* to the Lord, not because of their personal character, but because of the peculiar relation in which they, as the children of the covenant, stand to Him. Through baptism these children are dedicated to the Lord, to be trained

up from their infancy as His. By His own act of incorporation they are consecrated and given a place in His vineyard, planted in the garden of grace, to grow up as trees of righteousness. He is not the God of individuals only, but of the *families* of Israel.

To the Church, also, as His purchased possession, He has guaranteed His presence and guidance, that she may be encouraged to be faithful to her great trust. We are commanded to feed the flock of Christ which He hath purchased with His own blood, and the lambs must be fed as a part of that flock; while baptism is the token of our Saviour's presence and the pledge of the fulfilment of His promise, and through its observance the Church is permitted to cherish, and to follow out to their fullest scope, the yearnings of her heart for the welfare of those committed to her care by the Shepherd. This morning, the Church has met for public worship, made up of the families of Israel. This afternoon, the Church will again meet for the teaching of the young—the lambs of the flock being assembled for this purpose. On Thursday evening, the Church will again meet for social prayer and praise. In a few minutes, the Church will observe the ordinance of baptism, and publicly recognize as belonging to the Shepherd two little lambs of the flock. We are doing to-day what the Church has all along been

commanded to do, *i.e.*, receiving little children as Subjects of the Kingdom, and training them in loyalty of heart for the King. But how is the Church herself affected by all this? Is she encouraged and comforted by the Saviour's promised presence? And does the command, "Feed My lambs," find a ready response? We desire to wake up the Church to the full import of infant baptism, and, though it is true that many who have been baptized are no better than aliens, this does not detract from its spiritual value. The abuse of an ordinance is no argument against its use. Esau sold his birthright, for he was a profane man. Though a member of the chosen family, he found fellowship more congenial to his tastes outside. So is it with many to-day who belong to pious homes, for whom many a God-fearing mother's heart yearns; they find congenial companionship among the apostates from the faith. Many even turn their back upon the Saviour, but this does not prove His blood valueless, for He is still precious to those who believe. So the present standing of the *seed of the righteous* cannot be departed from without incurring great guilt.

When we take Scriptural views of baptism, and know the care that must be taken of the young, all unworthy ideas of the ordinance are removed, and we see that the place given to infants in the Church,

and the training which this implies, are worthy of the wisdom and love of God. What a gracious influence it ought to have on the minds of the young, the constant feeling that their parents have dedicated them to the Lord through the ordinance of baptism, and enrolled them as disciples; that they are to be constantly watched over by the Church, and that, as the lambs of His flock, they are dear to the Shepherd. We can make the fact of their dedication the plea with them before God not to neglect His covenant promises. We are permitted to plead, till Christ be formed within the hearts of our children, the hope of glory. We expect that as households worship here together on the earth, so households shall meet around the throne on high, and rejoice together, ascribing praise to Him who is not slack concerning His promises.

And what a gracious influence all this must have on the minds of Christian parents, and how it must tend to deepen their sense of responsibility as lying under the vows of the Lord concerning their child, and knowing that their chief concern is the moulding of his character! An unbelieving father blights the prospects of his child, and may be the cause of his moral ruin. The infidel, the profane, the Sabbath-breaker transmit their influence, and affect the well-being of those that come after them. While, on the

other hand, faith, piety, love, prayer, form a channel through which blessings flow upon the generations that follow, and our children become heirs of our privileges, and enter into the heritage of our faith.

A WORD TO CHILDREN.

Children, don't complain that you have been bound without your consent : we bind you in secular things without your consent. Both God and the laws of your country, as well as the requirements of Society, bind the young without asking their leave. The child is always bound by the father's act.

Children, grace has descended from generation to generation in an unbroken line of pious ancestry down to you, and now is that line to be broken by you? Are you to be the first who, through unbelief, will cast away from you the heritage of the Lord? Oh! shrink from breaking those covenant engagements; court not the condemnation of sin, nor try to break those cords with which Christ seeks to draw you to Himself and bind you forever to His own heart. Let this seal of the covenant ever remind you of your high calling, your privileges and duty as children of the covenant. Yield to the prayers and solicitations of your best friends, and grow up as the children of promise. Don't sell your birthright, for it has been given you as an everlasting possession.

To turn your back on your covenant, God may leave no place for repentance, though you were to seek it carefully with tears. Oh, may the Holy Spirit seal and keep you unto the day of redemption; may Jesus throw His everlasting arms around you and keep you for Himself; may the Father receive you as His own children into the home. Having received the *baptism of water*, may you all receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit—the washing of regeneration that will make you whiter than snow.

NOTE.—For some ideas in this chapter, the author is indebted to an article in the *Princeton Review*, read twenty-five years ago.

GROWTH IN THE DIVINE LIFE.

Let us go on to perfection.—Heb. vi., 1.

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus.—2 Pet. iii., 18.

Forgetting those things that are behind and reaching forth to those things that are before.—Philip. iii., 13.

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow on.—Philip. iii., 12.

For the perfecting of the saints . . . till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.—Eph. iv., 12, 13.

GROWTH IN THE DIVINE LIFE.

To grow in grace is different from merely growing old. It is very easy to grow old ; we have merely to sit still and do nothing, and the mere lapse of time accomplishes all the rest. But to grow old wisely, and in daily maturing discipleship, is the great and difficult task to which we must give ourselves. Some people grow old, struggling and fighting against the fact all the time, clinging to each birthday as a drowning man catches at an overhanging bough. They would fain linger by life's full, flowing stream, and bask in the sunshine of its bountiful promise ; but no man can fight against nature or the tendencies of things ; we must float down with the current, and should, therefore, strive that, by the grace of God, the passing years may witness our growth into a better, a nobler, and a happier self, each day learning to take a truer aim and worthier pride in all that is of good report, and cultivating those fruits of the Spirit which enrich and adorn our life, always tending to that glorious consummation when we shall attain to the moral perfection of Christ Himself, and be filled with all the fulness of God.

Saviour

to those

perfect,

the unity

a perfect

.—Eph.

GOING ON TO PERFECTION IS INCULCATED AS A
LAW ON THE CONSCIENCE.

Growth in grace is commanded as a duty, conferred as a grace, and is expected as the fruits of our faith. We must forget the things that are behind, and reach forth unto that which is before, and when we cease to press forward toward the mark, we lose the only evidence of being God's children. With that zeal, which was always a ruling passion in His own breast, the Apostle urges upon all disciples to leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on to perfection. Don't spend all your time in laying the foundation of repentance and faith, but build thereon a blessed structure of perpetual duration. "Add to your faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity." Every child of God must grow, expand, and ripen, till he comes to the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus. Not crawling as a worm in the dust among mean and base things, but we must rather aim to be as the eagle that soars upward, and that has the whole sweep of the heavens for his proud flight, till he seems to reach the very neighbourhood of the sun. We, too, must mount up with wings as eagles, and soar into the heavenly places.

PROGRESSIVE HOLINESS IS THE ORDINARY
SCRIPTURAL REPRESENTATION OF THE
DIVINE LIFE IN THE SOUL.

Paul was not exhibiting his own ideal, or describing his own case, but portraying the normal type of spiritual growth universally. It was needful for all to forget the things that are behind, and reach forth unto those that are before. All who profess to be His, must press forward toward the mark for the prize: reaching forth now and forever, and pulling the riper fruit that grows on the higher boughs in the garden of God. We must gain on the future by an obliviousness of the past, and, in a sense, far higher than the poet meant,

"Men may rise on stepping stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."

The believer's life is represented as a race—long and hazardous—which he must run, and many a weight he must lay aside, and many a difficulty encounter, and many an experience he must gain. Moreover, he can take but one step at a time, and, as he runs, he must ever look to Jesus and learn lessons for the way. In his early experiences and imperfect knowledge, a young convert is spoken of as a babe in Christ, with all the weaknesses and waywardness of a child; with the limited knowledge and self-will of a child, and simply because of these very limita-

tions, thinking he is wiser, and stronger, and better than any one else. But the babe in Christ must grow up from this crude and imperfect beginning, from this immature condition, to the full stature of a man in Christ, his nature being daily enriched, and rounded out into the symmetry and beauty of a mature disciple. Spiritual dwarfs are as little to be desired as natural ones, and the only reason we do not convert them into shows and objects of wonder is because they are so common.

No one begins as a strong man to run a race, but only as a child learning to walk with faltering step, and is kept from falling by the grace of God, till his goings are established in righteousness. No man begins to serve Christ at the point of perfection, or even of matured experience. This is where he leaves off, when he lays aside his tabernacle of clay. Grace in the heart is a small piece of leaven, and it often lies long concealed, but it gradually leavens the whole lump, till the whole man—body, soul, and spirit—yields a joyful obedience to that Saviour whom he has been learning more and more to love and serve. Our enlightenment in the knowledge of Christ is not an instantaneous act, as a flash of lightning dispels all the darkness in a moment. The long, dreary night of sin is dispelled as the natural night is. Day breaks upon the soul as it breaks upon the world, the

morning gradually expanding into noon. God shines into our heart as He shines over the fair face of creation. Enlightenment comes as the morning star that arises, and then the first faint streaks of light deepen into that better day, from whose presence all the shadows flee away.

THIS INCREASE IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS
GRADUAL AND PROGRESSIVE.

Planted together with Christ, we gradually grow together with Him. Our quickening through the Spirit is the beginning, of which our complete freedom from sin is the end. But between these there intervene the workings of God's renewing grace, and the various steps of progressive holiness. In the spiritual husbandry, as in the natural, there is first the blade, then the ear, and, last of all, the full corn in the ear ; the spring-time of sowing ; the bud, the blossoms, and various growths of summer ; and then the harvest of ripened fruits. A germ is planted in the heart, which is to grow into the tree of righteousness. That proud monarch of the forest, standing, through rain and sunshine, against the full sweep of many a tempest, has sprung from the acorn, and has grown by the double process of shedding off and putting on, of dying and living at the same time. So the plants of our Heavenly Father grow into

trees of righteousness, according to the same law of dying unto sin and living unto righteousness ; of putting off the old man and putting on the new ; unclothed, and being clothed upon ; each day putting on some new feature of Christ's perfect character. We must begin at the alphabet, pass through the rudiments, and on to the higher experiences of Christian knowledge. As in any other journey, it is only step by step we advance, going on from strength to strength. This advance may be small, yet it is real and permanent.

Sometimes we are growing when everything seems stationary, and really advancing when to all outward appearance we are going back. The Holy Spirit's secret work on the heart may not always be evident, and yet may prove the groundwork of a noble edifice. When we see a tree standing dead and cheerless in the January storm, or in bleak autumn days, when its leaves have all faded and been torn off by the blast—standing as a skeleton through the long, cold night, who would imagine there was any life left in that tree? Yet this is a necessary part of this tree's development : it is laying in the sap and richness that will enable it to all the more burst forth abundantly into leaf and blossom next summer. When the soil lies hard and frozen, it is being prepared for bearing the waving harvests next year.

There are living seeds beneath that cold, hard surface, that will germinate into bountiful life, when the time of the singing of birds has come.

So there are times when our nature seems dormant ; the soil of the heart is lying fallow and barren, and as if sheeted in frosty indifference. Yet all is only waiting God's good time ! The deadness we deplore may be a preparation for a more plenteous harvest, a brighter blooming forth, a more fruitful growing when times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord.

THIS IMMATURE BEGINNING BUT CONSTANT
GROWTH IN RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE UNIVERSAL
EXPERIENCE OF ALL GOD'S CHILDREN.

From scarcely attempting to spell out the name of Jesus, they at length come to know it as above every name, and sweet as honey to the mouth. At first hesitating to confess Him, He gradually becomes to His chosen ones all their desire, and all their salvation. Once feeling as if only "*almost persuaded*" to a full and joyous acceptance as the chosen of their heart's desire, they began to walk as little children, but their steps became stronger as they advanced along that way. All Christian biography is an illustration of this.

Examine the lives of the saints, and it will be seen

that they all drew nearer and yet nearer to the perfect pattern, and that the trees planted by the rivers of water became more firmly rooted the longer they grew. Who supposes that Abraham's strong faith in the God of the Covenant was learned in one day? To make such a sacrifice at the simple bidding of God was an attainment reached after a long walk with Him. We find Moses learning, through many a severe lesson, to curb his temper, till he became remarkable for his meekness, making the weak point of his character to become the strongest. It took Joseph a good many years of self-discipline to get over his vanity and boyish fancies, and the timid Nicodemus to grow into that holy courage that enabled him, in the face of danger, to take the mutilated body of his Master down from the tree—glad to bear all the odium of being regarded as one of His disciples. We admire the fruit, but overlook the long ripening process; we see results, but forget the ten thousand influences that went to produce them. So, in the case of each plant that grows in the garden of God, there must be first the bud, the twig, the sapling, before there can be any cedar of Lebanon with its wide refreshing shade.

In all those beautiful and graceful qualities of mind and heart, which most attract the love and admiration of those around us, and in all those graces

that fit for the purer and happier fellowship of Heaven, advancing years must still be years of growth and enlargement through the Spirit. In the last days it may be rather a ripening than a mere growth ; a mellowing rather than an expanding—coming on to perfection like the clustering fruits of autumn—a yellow sheaf to be gathered in. The yellow harvest-fields of waving grain are a great advance on the fresh, green blades of June, though both are natural in their season. So the later experiences of a believer are the ripened fruits of which the earlier are only the germs and tender buds ; and through all the incidents of the summer of life he goes on to perfection, growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus.

WE MUST MAKE EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE IN LIFE
CONTRIBUTE TO THIS INCREASE IN THE
KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

Some things we can carry on only at certain times and places, as the opportunities offer. The student must be in his study and with his books ; the scholar learns best when under the eye of an efficient teacher ; the farmer must be out in his fields, where the ploughing and sowing are done ; the professional man finds it necessary to be in his office or place of business, and the physician by the side of his patient.

But in the building up of Christian character in knowledge and righteousness, enriching the heart with all the graces of the Spirit, and learning to walk before the Lord unto all pleasing, every place and circumstance and event should furnish the fitting occasion, and contribute to our increase in the knowledge of God, and help us on the way to perfection.

As a magnet attracts the filings of steel from out a heap of rubbish, so when the heart has been magnetized by the love of Christ, what seems to be only refuse and rubbish, thrown into the great wastebasket of daily toil and endurance, may contribute most directly to the strengthening of our faith; while difficulties truly met may prove the very enriching of the heart. When the purpose of our life is focused on the upbuilding of character in Christian experience, golden shekels may be gathered up from all the miscellaneous changes in our lot. As the bee, flying over ten thousand flowers, brings back but one essence, and gathers up her stores of honey, and can gather them from soot when flowers fail her, so, whether travelling by the way, or living in the quiet of our homes; whether meeting with success or reverses; whether lying under a cloud of obloquy, or when the world is fawning upon us; whether in joy or in sorrow, Christian men and women must gather their wealth from all sides and sources.

Is the past to be only a barren waste, crumbling away behind us when we have travelled over it? Should not its holy memories and gathered experiences be rather a force at the back of the present, pushing us onward and upward? All the lessons from the past converging on the focus of daily duty and consecrating for us all the activities of life. And surely in mellowed experience, in calm and sober views of life and duty, in tempered expectations, in patience and sympathy, in sobriety of judgment, in charity toward all men, in all the good offices of Christian manhood, we should expect growth, and that all our foolish fancies shall be winnowed from us by the salutary discipline of life. In all that constitutes mature discipleship, age should be better than childhood, and the last days riper than the first, as the mature fruit is better than the bud or blossom, or the green pips of spring and early summer. As pilgrims, let all our way appear steps unto Heaven, and,

“Nightly pitch our moving tent

A day's march nearer home,”

And if our life is cast in the proper mould, it will constantly shape itself nearer and nearer to the perfect pattern.

TO THIS GROWTH NO LIMIT IS SET.

As to *duration*, it is for eternity, and as to *expansion*, it is up to the perfection of God, and the fulness that

is in Him. The top of the ladder on which we are climbing up touches Heaven, and we have around us the whole amplitude of God's grace as the ocean of His sunlight in waves of luminousness. Our best and richest gains here are but earnest and foretastes of the fulness of the great hereafter, when we shall be like Him and see Him as He is. *Now*, we see through a glass darkly, but *then*, face to face: *now*, we know only in part, but *then*, we shall know even as we are known. What a great difference between *now* and *then*. Through the multitudinous details of duty, we are following on to know the Lord, and His going forth before us will be as the morning, with increasing radiance, till all the shadows have fled away. A saving knowledge of the truth now is the earnest of an eternal weight of glory, and a pledge of endless fellowship with those whose robes have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.

The whole future is open, with nothing to obstruct, so that grace in the heart is Heaven begun, while all that comes after is the certain progress on our way to perfection! In setting out on this race, the believer is beginning a journey that brings him to the mountain of the Lord's house, and to His right hand where there are pleasures for evermore. Although we are sons of God *now*, it doth not yet appear what

we shall be. It is nothing short of the fulness of God we have to draw from. We have to attain to the full stature of men in Christ. Grace and peace are to be multiplied upon us, and every gain we make now increases our riches; every deposit here increases the interest of a bountiful return, not even a cup of cold water given will lose its reward.

The same grace saved the thief on the cross that saved the Apostle of the Gentiles; but Paul will start at a point far in advance of the former. Had the Apostle died on the day of his conversion, he still would have won the crown, but, then, the future would have been shorn of much of its brightness, and his inheritance would have been very different from what he finds it, when he has reached it through the faith and patience of his apostolic labours. There are those who reach the shore on broken bits of the vessel, all but lost, yet saved. While others go through the uplifted gates to the very palace of the King, with rewards far richer than if they had simply believed and been saved as by fire. The degree of glory, then, will be in proportion to the use we make of grace now. And what an advance from the first day when we learned to know the grace of God in truth, to those riper and fuller experiences of a mature disciple; and, still more, between this again, and the plentitude of the heavenly riches that is at God's right hand—an eternal weight of glory.

WHY ARE OUR ATTAINMENTS IN THE DIVINE LIFE
SO UNWORTHY OF OUR ADVANTAGES?

The question is a solemn one ! Why do we remain so long babes in Christ needing to be fed with milk ? Why does our Christian manhood remain so long immature, so that, when we should be teaching others, we need so much teaching ourselves, as to what are the first principles of godliness ? Why, in short, do we remain so long in the primary lessons, without going on to perfection, exhibiting to the world what the ripe fruits of the Spirit are, with our light shining steady and strong, and having our life in its rounded graces, as a city set on a hill that cannot be hid ?

Many of Christ's professed people bear a blight, like Pharoah's lean kine ; thin and lank, as those ill-favoured predictions of famine. What a stunted growth, and what poor specimens many of us are of renewing grace ! Like trees growing on a sand-bank, gnarled and bark-bound, and twisted into all manner of ill shapes ! And yet all the time under such a bright, beautiful heaven. Instead of being laden down under the abundance of the mellow clusters, only a blossom is seen here and there that produces small bunches of withered fruit. Christian workers labour long and earnestly, while the results are so disappointing. Sometimes, when we go a-fishing, we toil all night and catch nothing, or, it may be an

insignificant fish not worth taking up! Why do the disciples of such a Master learn so slowly, and grow up such poor specimens of Christian progress, and such imperfect copies of the grand original?

All this is owing to the fact that Christian progress does not enter into our calculations, and forms no part of our life-long purpose. In short, we do not lay our plans to grow. In spiritual, as in temporal things, the hand of the diligent maketh rich, while we are guilty of sloth and cruel neglect of our most obvious duty, and then wonder that we are not rich and increased with goods. Let any man treat his temporal interests in the same haphazard, half-hearted, slovenly way that he does his religious obligations, and very soon he would be landed in the bankrupt court. In heart-wealth, in the sweet assurance of hope, and in the ever-increasing fruits of the Spirit, it is still the hand of the diligent that maketh rich. He can no more gain the riches that perish not, without watching unto prayer, than he can gain the riches of mammon without labour, while, in the ripeness of Christian character, a believer generally becomes what he intends to be.

Men like Jonathan Edwards, Baxter, McCheyne, Chalmers, Burns, of China, etc., or any of those whose orbit of daily conduct lay near the sun of righteousness, had just that measure of Christian experience

and perfection which they had constantly and earnestly striven after. They reached the standard their hearts were set on. They ran with patience, and looked lovingly unto Jesus, and were daily transformed into the same image, while the gay, the worldly, and frivolous have no rich experiences of saving grace, or heart-felt trust in the Saviour, because they have never earnestly sought it. They have neither waited for, nor expected its bestowment. Not till the soul begins to hunger and thirst, and have a wholesome desire to be fed with the *Bread of Life*, can there be any real growth. As we cannot reap the harvest if we neglect to sow the seed in spring, so no man can neglect his spiritual opportunities without being impoverished ; he cannot shirk his duty without blunting his conscience ; *he cannot* disobey his Master and still *feel* right in his *heart* ; for no man can turn his back on his Saviour without a shadow coming over his face.

And the sphere of our growth is just where our life and duty lie. We must *honour* the Saviour and adorn His doctrine, where our feet *are* appointed to walk, and where our hands must do their work. We must grow in grace just where God's providence has planted us. We sometimes imagine that this growth takes place only in church, or at prayer-meeting. But wherever God's people happen to be, they must never

cease to reach forth to those things that are before. A mother remains at home on the Sabbath to take care of her little infant, and her virtues must grow amid the cares of the nursery. The man of business finds his temptations and his victories where he transacts his business, and has opportunities every day of showing what manner of man he is. The labourer must find an altar, where he toils in the sweat of his face. And so, in every sphere, men must honour God, and perfect their Christian character where their work lies, and where temptations meet them.

And let no one complain if it takes long to perfect some virtues. Provided the fruits are good, do not grudge the time it takes to mature them. We look into our garden in the spring-time, and see the brilliant colour of the crocuses appearing through the snow, but the rose comes later, and is more beautiful, and a far more perfect flower ; the apple, the peach, or pear tree takes longer to ripen ; the oak requires a century in order to come to its full stature. So, also, those graces and virtues in the life of man that are most durable and precious, ripen slowly, and cost us much pains, but they are all of permanent value, and worth waiting for. And what has simply budded here below, shall bloom and brighten eternally in that garden above, where nothing shall hurt or disturb.

On the other hand, how easily the plants and flowers bud and blossom under the refreshing shower

and the sun's quickening touch. How naturally the harvests ripen in the fields under favourable wind and rain ! The fruits of the earth come to perfection with such seeming ease and quiet. So the growth of the soul in all Christian knowledge and experience is under a similar fostering care. When the warm beams of His love come into the heart, then there is summer in the soul, and all manner of beauty and of Divine growths appears. It is so easy to go on to perfection, when He shines in our heart to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

Each immortal soul is as a frail bark freighted with hopes, prayers, and untold interests ; and we have only one voyage to make ! There is no second chance to cross those mighty deeps, no return upon our track to rectify the mistakes we have made. Therefore, let us steer well and bravely, right onward to the golden dock of eternity. Let us daily strive to grow up unto Him who is our Head, knowing that when we have reached home, we shall be filled with His fulness and see Him as He is. And then we shall, for the first time, know that our light afflictions experienced by the way are not to be compared with the eternal weight of glory which is now to be revealed in us.

Now we are before the throne, and serve Him day and night in His temple : and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among us.

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